

XVIth

International Conference of Ethiopian Studies

፲፯ኛው የኢትዮጵያ ጥናት ዓለም አቀፍ ጉባኤ



Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies

Volume 2

Edited by

Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele

 NTNU



SHOUT
SHARE **IT**

Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies

Volume 2

**Edited by
Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele**

Department of Social Anthropology,
Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, 2009

Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, ed. by Svein Ege,
Harald Aspen, Birhanu Teferra and Shiferaw Bekele

ISBN 978-82-90817-27-0 (printed)

Vol. 1-4

<http://www.svt.ntnu.no/ices16/>

Printed in Norway by NTNU-trykk, Trondheim 2009

© The authors

Table of contents

Author index	xv
Preface	xix
Archaeology	
The Temple of Yeha: Geo-Environmental Implications on its Site Selection and Preservation <i>Asfawossen Asrat</i>	1
The Archaeology of Islam in North East Shoa <i>Kassaye Begashaw</i>	11
History	
A Miracle of the Archangel Uriel Worked for <i>Abba</i> Giyorgis of Gasəṣṣa <i>Getatchew Haile</i>	23
<i>Ras Wäsän Säggäd</i> , a Pre-Eminent Lord of Early 16th-Century Ethiopia <i>Michael Kleiner</i>	37
T.aytu's Foremothers. Queen Əleni, Queen Säblä Wängel and Bati Dəl Wämbära <i>Rita Pankhurst</i>	51
Aṣe Iyasu I (1682-1706) and the synod of Yəbaba <i>Verena Böll</i>	65
Performance and Ritual in Nineteenth-Century Ethiopian Political Culture <i>Izabela Orlowska</i>	75
Shäwa, Ethiopia's Prussia. Its Expansion, Disappearance and Partition <i>Alain Gascon</i>	85
Imprints of the Time : a Study of the hundred Ethiopian Seals of the Boucoiran collection <i>Serge Tornay and Estelle Sohier</i>	99
The Hall Family and Ethiopia. A Century of Involvement <i>Toby Berger Holtz</i>	109
Using Cases to Teach Ethiopian, African and World History <i>James Quirin</i>	119
“Knowledge is an immovable eternal law which rules the world.” Gäbre-Heywät Baykädañ's Blueprint for Ethiopia's Sovereign Modernity <i>Matteo Salvatore</i>	127

Table of contents, vol. 1

Economic and Social Innovation during the Last Years of Emperor Mənilək's Life and the Short Reign of Ləj Iyasu <i>Richard Pankhurst</i>	137
<i>Imam</i> Sugato Zäyni. A war-lord of the <i>Selt'ə Gogot</i> . <i>Dirk Bustorf</i>	151
The foreign politics of ləğ Iyasu in 1915/16 according to newly discovered government papers <i>Wolbert G.C. Smidt</i>	163
Exploring Landscape Change in Ethiopia: Evidence from Imaging and its Interpretation <i>Donald Crummey</i>	173
The Ethiopian Salt Trading System in the 20th Century: A View from Mäqäla, Northern Ethiopia <i>Tsegay B. Gebrelibanos</i>	185
“Deux ans de séjour en Abyssinie ou la vie morale, politique et religieuse” par R.P. Dimethees as an issue for the histoire et the culture Ethiopian <i>Eleonora Lvova</i>	203
Beta Israel Students Who Studied Abroad 1905-1935 <i>Shalva Weil</i>	209
A Japanese Scoundrel's Skin Game: Japanese Economic Penetration of Ethiopia and Diplomatic Complications Before the Second Italo-Ethiopian War <i>J. Calvitt Clarke III</i>	219
Colonialism as State-Maker in the History of the Horn of Africa: A Reassessment <i>Giampaolo Calchi Novati</i>	233
The Lion of Judah at Camelot: U. S. Foreign Policy towards Ethiopia as Reflected in the Second State Visit of Emperor Haylä Selassé I to the United States <i>Theodore M. Vestal</i>	245
Addis Ababa University in the Shadow of the Derg, 1974-1991 <i>Randi Rønning Balsvik</i>	259

Anthropology

The Forming of Town in Pastoral Society and its Meaning The case of Borana in South Ethiopia <i>Chikage Oba</i>	273
When Pastoral Commons are Privatised: Resource Deprivation and Changes in Land Tenure Systems among the Karrayu in the Upper Awash Valley Region of Ethiopia <i>Ayalew Gebre</i>	283
Why did the Manjo convert to Protestant? Social Discrimination and Coexistence in Kafa, Southwest Ethiopia <i>Sayuri Yoshida</i>	299
Violence Extended into the Middle Omo Valley: A View of Recent Raiding Conflicts in Malo, Southwest Ethiopia <i>Takeshi Fujimoto</i>	311
„How we let go war“ <i>Echi Christina Gabbert with Ginno Ballo</i>	323
<i>Aynä ṭəla</i> : the Shadow of the Eye. Healers and Traditional Medical Knowledge in Addis Ababa <i>Eliana Pili</i>	337
The Gumuz: Are They Shifting Cultivators? <i>Berihun M. Mekonnen</i>	349
Sharing System of the “Scarce Resources” in Southern Ethiopia <i>Toru SOGA</i>	357
Beads in Konso, Southern Ethiopia <i>Birgitta Kimura and Dinote Kusia Shenkere</i>	369
Variations in Pottery Making in Southwestern Ethiopia <i>Morie Kaneko</i>	383
The Phallsification of the Kallačča: or, Why Sometimes a Cigar Is a Cigar <i>Hermann Amborn</i>	395
A History of Sport in Ethiopia <i>Solomon Addis Getahun</i>	409
Leaving Asmara – Individual migration projects of Eritrea’s 2nd generation of refugees <i>Magnus Treiber</i>	419
The mythical reflexivity of the Burji. Presentation of an ethnological-linguistic methodology for interpreting oral literature <i>Alexander Kellner</i>	425

Table of contents, vol. 2

Destitution and Life Quality: Objective, subjective and dynamic measures and interpretation based on household cases from Dinki, Amhara Region <i>Alula Pankhurst</i>	435
 Islam	
The Coming of Age of Islamic Studies in Ethiopia: The Present State of Research and Publication <i>Hussein Ahmed</i>	449
The Grandchildren of Abraha <i>Haggai Erlich</i>	457
Religious Change and Islam: The Emergence of the Salafi Movement in Bale, Ethiopia <i>Terje Østebø</i>	463
From Local to National Prominence: the Life and Achievements of Šayh al-Hāḡḡ Muhammad Tānī b. Habīb b. Bašīr (1913/14-1989): Ethiopian Muslim Scholar, Teacher and Spiritual Leader <i>Hussein Ahmed</i>	477
 Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahedo Church	
On the Filming of “Pilgrimage to Ya’a” <i>Yasuo Matsunami and Minako Ishihara</i>	491
Spirit Possession and Pilgrimage The Formation and Configuration of the <i>Tijjānī</i> Cult in Western Oromoland <i>Minako Ishihara</i>	505
The Woman in the Creation Story According to the <i>Andāmta</i> Commentary of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church <i>Mersha Alehegne</i>	517
Traditional Teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow <i>Christine Chaillot</i>	527
Exploring <i>iddir</i> . Toward Developing a Contextual Theology of Ethiopia <i>Solomon Dejene</i>	535
 Politics	
Political Conflicts in Ethiopia – in View of the Two-Faced Amhara Identity <i>Siegfried Pausewang</i>	549
Africanity, African Intellectuals and the Study of Ethiopia: Thoughts on the Relevance of Mazruiana <i>Seifudein Adem</i>	561

Table of contents, vol. 2

Prestige is the Argument: Ideas of Power and Development Aid in Ethiopia <i>Tsehai Berhane-Selassie</i>	573
The Ethiopian Diaspora and Homeland Conflict <i>Terrence Lyons</i>	589
US involvement in Africa, with special attention paid to Ethiopia as an American ally between 1941 and 1974 <i>Katarzyna Hryćko</i>	601
Regional Security Complex with Ethiopia as the Source of Eritrea's Defense Policy <i>Scarlett Lopez Freeman</i>	609
Legal institutional hierarchies, justice and social order in Gurage area of Ethiopia <i>Getinet Assefa Gadena</i>	617
Perceptions of Fairness and Justice among the Anywaa Living in the Ethiopian Region of Gambella: their relevance to conflict transformation <i>Monika M Sommer</i>	627
A National Perspective on the Conflict in Gambella <i>Dereje Feyissa</i>	641
The Wayyane in Tigray and the reconstruction of the Ethiopian government in the 1940's <i>Momoka Maki</i>	655
Is pluralism a fiasco in Ethiopia? <i>Solomon Ali</i>	665
Authoritarianism and the Ethiopian Body Politic. Dissonance between Democratization and Elite Political subculture <i>Paulos Milkias</i>	673

Development

Gardens of <i>Eucalyptus</i> and <i>Festuca</i> in the highlands of Central Ethiopia: a peasants' response to economic and land issues <i>Clarisse Guiral</i>	697
Ethnobotanical study of medicinal plants in Kafficho people, southwestern Ethiopia <i>Tesfaye Awas and Sebsebe Demissew</i>	711
Welenkomi 35 years later <i>Axel Baudouin</i>	727
The Ethiopian Extension and the Farmer: A View from the Farm <i>Abeje Berhanu</i>	751
The Challenges of Land Tenure Reform to Structural Transformation of the Economy: Lessons from Country Experiences <i>Getnet Alemu</i>	761
The Effects of Fair Trade on Coffee Producers: A Case Study of Ethiopian Coffee Cooperatives <i>Yuka Kodama</i>	779
An Assessment of the Role of Local Institutions and Social Capital in Household Food Security: A Case Study at Two Rural Communities in Oromiya Zone, Amhara Region <i>Degefa Tolossa</i>	793
Lessons from the Food-for-Work Experience of the 1970s and 80s: The Case of Project Ethiopia 2488—Rehabilitation of Forest, Grazing and Agricultural Lands <i>Yeraswork Admassie</i>	809
Rainfall variability and crop production in Ethiopia Case study in the Amhara region <i>Woldeamlak Bewket</i>	823
Poverty, Food insecurity and Livelihood strategies in Rural Gedeo: The case of Haroressa and Chichu PAs, SNNP <i>Shumete Gizaw Woldeamanuel</i>	837
The Predicaments of Amhara Migrant-settlers in East Wollega Zone, Ethiopia <i>Tesfaye Tafesse</i>	851
Resettling the Discourse on “Resettlement Schemes” Towards a new approach <i>Derese Getachew Kassa</i>	867
State Sponsored and Self-initiated Resettlements: Their Impacts on the Ecology of Resettlement Areas (The case of <i>Angar Gutin</i> in Eastern <i>Wallaga</i>). <i>Zelalem Teferra</i>	881

Table of contents, vol. 3

Seeds that Do Not Sprout: Ethiopia's Urban – Rural Links and Their Development Disconnect <i>Getachew Felleke</i>	897
 Urban studies	
Urban Challenges in Addis Ababa. PhD and Master Theses from Department of Urban Design and Planning, Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art, NTNU, Trondheim <i>Bjørn Røe</i>	917
Manipulating Ambiguous Rules: Informal Actors in Urban land Management, a Case Study in Kolfe-Keranio Sub-city, Addis Ababa <i>Yirgalem Mahiteme</i>	929
Between Renting and Owning: Saving and Credit Cooperative based tenure transformation in the inner-city “slums” of Addis Ababa <i>Elias Yitbarek Alemayehu</i>	943
Informality as a solution. An analysis of the informal plastic recovery system in Addis Ababa <i>Camilla Louise Bjerkli</i>	957
Shopping Centers as Black Boxes: A Reflection in Philosophy of Engineering Design <i>Setargew Kenaw Fantaw</i>	977
The Geography of the Ancient Walled City of Harar: Urban Structure, Cultural Heritage, and Population Diversity <i>Roberto Bianchini, Kadigia Ali Mohamud, and Francesco Maimone</i>	991
 Children	
Early Marriage and the Campaign against It in Ethiopia <i>Berihun M. Mekonnen and Harald Aspen</i>	1001
My shop is my school: Children's perspectives on work and school in a multi-ethnic town in southern Ethiopia <i>Alebachew Adem Nurye</i>	1013
Church as a refuge for marginalized children in urban Ethiopia <i>Girmachew Adugna</i>	1025
Šik'älla: the Survival Strategies of Ethiopian Child Beggars <i>Tatek Abebe</i>	1033

Table of contents, vol. 3

Human rights

Wayyuu – Women’s Respect and Rights among the Arsi-Oromo <i>Marit Tolo Østebø</i>	1049
Critical Evaluation of Human Rights Strategies A Case Study of CEDAW and Women’s NGOs in Ethiopia <i>Frances Olsen</i>	1061
Understanding Famine in Ethiopia: Poverty, Politics and Human Rights <i>Alexander Attilio Vadala</i>	1071

Education

Language Determination in Ethiopia: What Medium of Instruction? <i>Berhanu Bogale</i>	1089
Secondary School Teacher Deployment in Ethiopia: Challenges and Policy Options for Redressing the Imbalances <i>Ayalew Shibeshi</i>	1103
Dropout and Learning Difficulties in 1st Grade Government Primary Schools in Ethiopia <i>Jana Zehle</i>	1117
Changes in Ethiopia's Language and Education Policy – Pioneering Reforms? <i>Katrin Seidel and Janine Moritz</i>	1125
Trend Analysis of Males' and Females' Education in Different School Levels and School Types in Addis Ababa <i>Tamirie Andualem</i>	1139

Music

Music in the Ethiopian American Diaspora: A Preliminary Overview <i>Kay Kaufman Shelemay</i>	1153
The Significance of St. Yared's Music in the Age of Globalization <i>Kifle Assefa</i>	1165
Music, Song, and Dance of the Blue Nile Borderlands Revivals in the Refugee Context <i>Wendy James</i>	1171
Diverse Connections as a Model for the 21st Century Yared School of Music <i>Cynthia Tse Kimberlin</i>	1185
The Practices of Music Research in Ethiopia Successes and Challenges <i>Woube Kassaye</i>	1199
Ethiopian Kiñit (scales). Analysis of the formation and structure of the Ethiopian scale system <i>Ezra Abate</i>	1213
'Kedassie'. A Kemant (Ethiopian Agaw) Ritual <i>Olivier Tourny</i>	1225
Arsi Oromo Society Viewed Through Its Wedding Music <i>Leila Qashu</i>	1235
Progress of the UNESCO/Norway Funds in Trust cooperation project (2005-2008): "Ethiopia – Traditional Music, Dance and Instruments" <i>Fumiko Ohinata</i>	1249

Table of contents, vol. 4

Fine arts

Contemporary Ethiopian Painting in Traditional Style Beginning and Change <i>Elisabeth Biasio</i>	1259
An Early 20th Century Private Collection of Ethiopian Paintings formed by Wilhelm Freiherr von Schoen, German Ambassador to Ethiopia 1932–1934 <i>Girma Fisseha</i>	1273
A Second Version of the Pictorial Presentation of the Journey of the Queen Mākəda <i>Veronika Six</i>	1277
Negus and the culture of Abbay-Ethiopian Region <i>Girma Moges</i>	1289

Literature

Catalogues and Digitization for Previously Uncatalogued Ethiopian Manuscripts in England and North America <i>Steve Delamarter</i>	1305
New socio-political situation in Ethiopia and its reflection in literature and theatre <i>Galina Balashova</i>	1317
The Oromo as recorded in Ethiopian literature <i>Ekaterina Gusarova</i>	1323
Orality in the Chronicle of King Tewodros II <i>Didier Morin</i>	1333
Notes on imagination, literariness, facts and fictionality in war memoirs <i>Birhanu Teferra Rediet</i>	1339
Amharic Praise Poems Related to Emperors Tewodros II and Yohannes IV <i>Getie Gelaye</i>	1349
Women in Ethiopic Hagiographies <i>Selamawit Mecca</i>	1365

Table of contents, vol. 4

Linguistics

North vs. South Ethiopian Semitic <i>Rainer Voigt</i>	1375
Amharic Speech Recognition: Past, Present and Future <i>Solomon Teferra Abate, Martha Yifiru Tachbelie, Wolfgang Menzel</i>	1391
A Typology Of The Middle In Ethiopian Afro-Asiatic Languages ₁ <i>Tolemariam Fufa Teso</i>	1403
Rethinking Awngi Tone <i>Andreas Joswig</i>	1417
Definiteness in Diraytata <i>Wondwosen Tesfaye</i>	1427

Appendix: Conference programme

Author index

Abeje Berhanu	751
Alebachew Adem Nurye	1013
Alexander Attilio Vadala	1071
Amborn, Hermann	395
Asfawossen Asrat	1
Aspen, Harald and Berihun M. Mekonnen	1001
Ayalew Gebre	283
Ayalew Shibeshi	1103
Balashova, Galina	1317
Balsvik, Randi Rønning	259
Baudouin, Axel	727
Berhanu Bogale	1089
Berihun M. Mekonnen	349
Berihun M. Mekonnen and Harald Aspen	1001
Bianchini, Roberto, Kadigia Ali Mohamud and Francesco Maimone	991
Biasio, Elisabeth	1259
Birhanu Teferra Rediet	1339
Bjerkli, Camilla Louise	957
Bustorf, Dirk	151
Böll, Verena	65
Calchi Novati, Giampaolo	233
Chaillot, Christine	527
Chikage Oba	273
Clarke III, J. Calvitt	219
Crummey, Donald	173
Degefa Tolossa	793
Delamarter, Steve	1305
Dereje Feyissa	641
Derese Getachew Kassa	867
Dinote Kusia Shenkere and Birgitta Kimura	369
Elias Yitbarek Alemayehu	943
Erlich, Haggai	457
Ezra Abate	1213
Freeman, Scarlett Lopez	609
Fujimoto, Takeshi	311
Gabbert, Echi Christina with Ginno Ballo	323
Gascon, Alain	85
Getachew Felleke	897

Author index

Getachew Felleke	897
Getatchew Haile	23
Getie Gelaye	1349
Getinet Assefa Gadena	617
Getnet Alemu	761
Girma Fisseha	1273
Girma Moges	1289
Girmachew Adugna	1025
Guiral, Clarisse	697
Gusarova, Ekaterina	1323
Holz, Toby Berger	109
Hryćko, Katarzyna	601
Hussein Ahmed	449
Hussein Ahmed	477
Ishihara, Minako	505
Ishihara, Minako and Yasuo Matsunami	491
James, Wendy	1171
Joswig, Andreas	1417
Kadigia Ali Mohamud, Roberto Bianchini and Francesco Maimone	991
Kaneko, Morie	383
Kassaye Begashaw	11
Kellner, Alexander	425
Kifle Assefa	1165
Kimberlin, Cynthia Tse	1185
Kimura, Birgitta and Dinote Kusia Shenkere	369
Kleiner, Michael	37
Kodama, Yuka	779
Lvova, Eleonora	203
Lyons, Terrence	589
Maimone, Francesco Roberto Bianchini and Kadigia Ali Mohamud	991
Maki, Momoka	655
Martha Yifiru Tachbelie, Solomon Teferra Abate and Wolfgang Menzel	1391
Matsunami, Yasuo and Minako Ishihara	491
Mersha Alehegne	517
Menzel, Wolfgang, Solomon Teferra Abate and Martha Yifiru Tachbelie	1391
Morin, Didier	1333
Moritz, Janine and Katrin Seidel	1125
Ohinata, Fumiko	1249
Olsen, Frances	1061
Orlowska, Izabela	75
Østebø, Marit Tolo	1049

Author index

Østebø, Terje	463
Pankhurst, Alula	435
Pankhurst, Richard	137
Pankhurst, Rita	51
Paulos Milkias	673
Pausewang, Siegfried	549
Pili, Eliana	337
Qashu, Leila	1235
Quirin, James	119
Røe, Bjørn	917
Salvadore, Matteo	127
Sebsebe Demissew and Tesfaye Awas	711
Seidel, Katrin and Janine Moritz	1125
Seifudein Adem	561
Selamawit Mecca	1365
Setargew Kenaw Fantaw	977
Shelemay, Kay Kaufman	1153
Shumete Gizaw Woldeamanuel	837
Six, Veronika	1277
Smidt, Wolbert G.C.	163
Soga, Toru	357
Sohier, Estelle and Serge Tornay	99
Solomon Addis Getahun	409
Solomon Ali	665
Solomon Dejene	535
Solomon Teferra Abate, Martha Yifiru Tachbelie and Wolfgang Menzel	1391
Sommer, Monika M	627
Tamirie Andualem	1139
Tatek Abebe	1033
Tesfaye Awas and Sebsebe Demissew	711
Tesfaye Tafesse	851
Tolemariam Fufa Teso	1403
Tornay, Serge and Estelle Sohier	99
Tourny, Olivier	1225
Treiber, Magnus	419
Tsegay B.Gebrelibanos	185
Tsehai Berhane-Selassie	573
Vestal, Theodore M.	245
Voigt, Rainer	1375
Weil, Shalva	209
Woldeamlak Bewket	823

Author index

Wondwosen Tesfaye	1427
Woube Kassaye	1199
Yeraswork Admassie	809
Yirgalem Mahiteme	929
Yoshida, Sayuri	299
Zehle, Jana	1117
Zelalem Teferra	881

The Forming of Town in Pastoral Society and its Meaning The case of Borana in South Ethiopia

Chikage Oba¹

Most of the people in Borana breed cattle, sheep and goats, and they move between their homesteads and camps in order to adapt to the seasonal changes in the savanna. However, at present, 17% of all Borana people have stopped moving, and have settled down. In this short thesis, I will focus on urban Borana. I will describe how the town has been formed and how urban Borana people have settled as permanent residents detaching themselves from rural life. Finally, I will dwell on the meaning of dividing into two societies for Borana.

Introduction

Borana is mainly located in the districts of Yabelo, Dirre and Areero in the southern part of Ethiopia. According to the official government statistics in 2005, the number of people living in this area is 248,582. The rural (*baadiya*) population accounts for 83% of this number while the urban (*thira*) population is 17%. Most of the people in Borana breed cattle, sheep and goats, and they move between their homesteads and camps in order to adapt to the seasonal changes in the savanna. This migration in search of water and pasture has been an important activity for the local stock breeders as a means of maintaining the lives of humans and livestock.

However, at present, 17% of all Borana people have stopped moving, and have settled down. They have formed a community which is different from the nomadic one and which has been gradually increasing in Borana-land since the 1940's. Thus Borana society has been divided into urban settlement and rural pastoral people. It is impossible to ignore this urbanization for understanding Borana society and culture at the present time.

In this short thesis, I will focus on urban Borana. I will describe how the town has been formed and how urban Borana people have settled as permanent residents detaching themselves from rural life. Finally, I will dwell on the meaning of dividing into two societies for Borana.

The History of Town Formation

There is an international road passing through the center of Borana-land. It comes from Addis-Ababa and reaches Nairobi through Moyale. The prototype of this main road was built during the Italian Rule Period (1935—1941) and it was paved with concrete between 1963—1968 during Hile Selassie Period (1941—1973). After its pavement, the flow of people, materials, information and cultures from highland and Kenya increased and became more intensive. There are some towns with big population, shops, restaurant, bar, mosque, church, school, governmental office and clinic by this main road. They function as a direct connection between the inside pastoral life and the

¹ The Graduate University for advanced studies, School of Cultural and Social studies, Department of Regional studies, Osaka, Japan

outside world. These towns have also weekly markets – in Yabelo on Tuesday and Saturday, in Dubuluk on Friday, in Mega on Tuesday and Saturday, and in Bokuruboma on Thursday.

There are also many non-paved roads in the savanna, a kind of network which spreads to connect the towns by the main road. These roads have been built since 1968. Almost all of them pass by traditional water wells (*eela*) which are very important places for all Borana. As Borana people try to make their homesteads not far from water wells, these roads pass through the center of each region. Once the roads are made, some petty shops and bars begin to appear nearby water wells. Freight trucks and buses run on these roads to bring goods, merchants and customers for the weekly town markets located by the main road. Small settlements near water wells which are far from main road also have small weekly markets. Towns and small settlements connected by such a road network became the centers of each rural area.

How were the settlements by the main road and non-paved roads formed? They were not made by the government or any other power. I can point out two types of formation by looking back into the history of these settlements. We can see the first type of town formed by immigration of other ethnic groups. They started to settle down in Borana-land since 1940's. Their settlements gradually expanded as Borana people came here and governmental institution offices were established after that. In the second type of town formation, Borana people put the beginning of these settlements by settling down near water wells. We can observe this phenomenon especially since 1992 when capitalistic political power was established. Due to the economy policy of the new government, market economy has been activated and weekly markets have appeared even in small settlements. In addition, the government has built primary schools near water wells. The spread of market economy and education might lead to the settlement of many Borana people. In this thesis, we focus on the first type of settlements and follow their process of formation.

History shows that other ethnic groups (Konso, Burji, Garri, Arsi, Somali, and Shawa-Oromo) immigrated to Borana-land from the later half of 1940's to the first half of 1950's. This immigration was caused by big droughts in the period of 1941–1945. Farmers had to immigrate and cultivate lands beyond their territory. Stock breeders lost many livestock and had to start agriculture. Mega, Yabelo and Hidi-lola town were chosen as immigration destinations proper for land cultivation by other ethnic groups. Burji, Somali, Garri, and Arsi have settled down and started to cultivate land in Mega. According to my informants, although there were some conflicts about the land between these people and Borana, they lived together and exchanged various goods. Borana sold butter, milk, *soodda* and *mogaado*¹ to get maze from them and iron and cloth from Konso. In Hidi-lola near Kenya and Ethiopia borderline, Showa-Oromo immigrated and started land cultivation after the Italian Rule Period. There was established a marketplace where people exchanged maze, cattle and goods produced in Kenya and flowing through the border since 1950's. The Konso ethnic group immigrated in Yabelo. One of my informants went to sell goats for the first time in 1955. He sold his livestock for paying tax. He saw many things (grains, species, coffee, tobacco and so

¹ Salt (*soodda*) and *mogaado* had been exchanged in the trade between Borana and Somali at least from the middle of 19th to the 1930's. It is also important goods on the market. In Borana-land, there are three salt lakes (Soodda/Dillo/ Mogaado). There are three kinds of salt, *dhawa*, *ilkoole*, *lokke*. *Dhawa* is white salt. *lokke* and, *ilkoole* are eaten by livestock. *Mogaado* is a salty spice. Borana chew tobacco with this.

on) and merchants came from Highland at that time. In the 1950's, Yabelo formed as the main cattle market in Borana-land.

These settlements in the early days were established by immigrants. At the same time, they started functioning as marketplaces. Borana people have gradually come to live in these settlements. Now let's move our point of view to smaller settlements. We will see in detail how settlements formed by immigrants and how Borana entered these societies. I will present the case of Soodda, a place far from the main road, 50km away from Mega.

At present, about 1000 people live in Soodda town. 74% of them are Borana.² *Soodda* means salt in Borana language. It is also a place name. As the name shows, there is a salt lake nearby Soodda settlement. This salt lake(*booge*) exists on the bottom of a volcano crater. In Borana history, the salt lake was a place of vital importance for Borana people who did not have livestock. As there is no water place around the crater, Borana did not build any homesteads or even a camp. The road to salt lake was so dangerous that only Borana who were free of cattle could go and bring salt. Salt is a valuable thing for life. Not only Borana but also other ethnic groups are eager to get it. Borana who did not breed cattle could live by exchanging salt for milk and butter which other Borana brought. Then they exchanged salt with Somali and Konso to get cloth, ornament, iron and maze.

According to some of my informants living in Soodda, the Italian Army built the road leading to the salt lake in 1930's. After its completion, the way to the lake became safer. In 1946, three Somali men immigrated to that area at first. The next immigrants are one Amuhala sent to collect salt tax and four Shawa-Oromo people sent as supervisor in cultivation by Hyle Selasie. According to the Borana salt tax collector, when he came here in 1955, the members of the settlement included Somali families, governmental officers and five families who had come from Konso. As Konso families have called some relatives from their country, the number of Konso people has gradually increased since 1955. Somali and Konso people collected and exchanged salt as a way of living. In 1950's, Somali took salt by camel to Dila, exchanging it to grains and things produced in the highland. Then they sold these things in Soodda. They bought a truck and expanded their trading to Awasa in the 1960's after the pavement of the main road was completed.

Before 1960, almost all immigrants were not Borana. However, many Borana people have gradually immigrated to Soodda since the 1960's. An old Borana woman who is 76 years old and has been living here since 1960 said that they immigrated as her husband did not have any cattle. Her husband worked on the salt lake, and she sold firewood for living. A Borana man who is 40 years old has been living here since 1984. When he immigrated to Soodda, he was 16 years old. As his father lost all his livestock in the 1983-1984 droughts, his family had to immigrate. A young Borana who is 20 years old came to Soodda in 1994, when he was 8 years old. As his oldest brother has started salt collecting work, he and his mother were urged to settle near by him. His brother and he had to search for another way of living because their father had a lot of sons. They could not get enough cattle to live on. He also has started to manage a shop since 2003.

² In the short rainy season of 2005, rainfall was very scarce and the Government granted food aids in Borana. I received the name list of all Soodda habitants. I made a research and collected data from all the household (119) about: a) ethnicity, b) ownership of livestock, c) life strategy, d) religion.

In 1979, Hjoirt made a research about Isiolo town in Northern Kenya mainly formed by pastoralists. He explored the impact of stock breeders settling down in Town. He also pointed out the fact of decreasing livestock by droughts and conflict. Isioro was the place of refuge for stock breeders who had lost their livestock. This was a means to earn some income and maintain their lives by agriculture. They tried to return to their pastoral life using the opportunities of the town. [Hjort, 1979] Lack of cattle was one of the factors for Borana immigration to Soodda in the period of 1960's – 1990's. They also had to find another way of living, different from the pastoral. They started work in the salt lake following the example of other ethnic groups. In Soodda, 71% of men householders are salt takers and land cultivators. In case of divorce or death of the husband, the woman becomes a householder. 45 % of them rely on their work as a merchant, selling salt, alcohol and firewood by themselves.

Life Strategy of Urban Borana

Urban Borana people make their living by agriculture and market trade in Towns; they are not occupied with stock breeding. In this capture, I will focus on Borana women traders. More specifically, I will describe how urban Borana make their life strategy in town.

There is no tax for business in weekly markets. Everyone can be a trader. There are two kinds of weekly markets in Borana-land. One is the livestock market which is occupied by men merchants. The other one is the merchandise market occupied by women. On this kind of market, there are A) miscellaneous industrial goods from Highland, Kenya and China, B) preferable goods for Borana, C) grains, D) clothes, E) ironware made by Konso, F)salt, G)milk, butter, chicken, eggs, H) medicine for livestock, I)chat, J) fruit and vegetables. The merchants on the market can be classified into two groups. The first one is made of people who have capital, stock transport and sell large amount of goods. It is a rather small group which consists mostly of people from other ethnic groups. Only a few Borana people are successful as cattle traders. The other group consists of people who do not have capital; they buy goods from big merchants or they buy goods on credit and pay back money after selling. So to speak, they are those who sell on a consignment basis. Most of them are Borana.

One Borana woman petty trader said she started her business from *taasa* (it is 1L of aluminum can, it is a unit for measuring) thus making her funds. Her words imply that it is so easy to start business on markets without capital. They save capital through petty trading and change into trader who sell many kinds of goods. I will explain this system introducing one case of a Borana woman petty trader.

The case of a Borana woman petty trader.

Sake is 46 years old. She has been living in Dubuluk Town since 1999 with her 5 children. Dubuluk is situated by the main road and its market day is Friday. She has been engaged in petty trade in weekly market at Dubuluk and Qarsa-dambii settlement which is 30 km away from Dubuluk. Before that she had lived in the rural area of Goobsoo which is about 40 km far from Dubuluk. She moved to Dubuluk because of her marriage. But later she got divorced. When she was 31 years old, she started her petty trade. According to the Borana marriage practices, women who get divorced cannot marry again. After the divorce they are supported financially by own relatives or their relatives-in-law. But it is such an unstable life that Sake started this trade to make her living by herself. I observed her trading in Dubuluk market in March.

At 8 o'clock in the morning women traders line up their goods in front of them at the marketplace. In front of Sake, there is sugar, soup, tea, oil. She got the sugar from a sugar merchant and she has to pay its cost later. If she can manage to sell 120 kg of sugar, her benefit is 20 birr. But it is too much sugar to sell all by herself so she sells this quantity together with some other traders. In this way petty traders get 1birr per 6 kg sugar. As they do not have any capital, they do their business on a consignment basis and get a very small profit. However, if they have some small capital, they buy one set of goods. For example, Sake bought 24 packages of oil for 150 birr on the day of my observation. If she sells all, her profit will be 18birr.

Her daughter who is 14 years old continues with lining up *qundhii* (incense for women) and salt that Sake has bought before. Sake has also bought from some wholesale stores small plastic baskets, soups, electric batteries produced in Addis-ababa. She has also bought *kulufidhii* (a kind of herb) which Borana women put on their heads with butter, chewing tobacco and *mogaado*. She puts all her goods on the market. Not only she but also almost all the petty traders arrange their stock on the marketplace and sell the same kinds of goods at the same price.

At around 10 o'clock, people from rural area started coming to the market. A teenager from the rural area is the first customer to visit Sake's shop. He came to buy *qundhii*. As I tended the store, a student in the town and his sister who were interested in me as a foreigner came to talk and bought 1kg of sugar and some tea. As soon as Sake finished arranging all goods and sat down on her seat, a woman from Goobsoo came and bought many goods from her. According to Sake, the woman raised the funds necessary for her trade from her fellow villagers. Later she gives a part of her profit to her investors. The woman bought from Sake 200kg of salt, 5kg of sugar, 60 pieces of soup, 14 packages of tea, 2 packages of oil, *kulufidii*, chewing tobacco and *mogaado*. She left these goods in Sake's place while she went to buy some other things. Although the woman bought a lot of things from another trader, she brought all goods to Sake's place. It is important for a petty trader to build a good relationship of trust between her customers and herself. Keeping the customer's goods is a part of this. As I already mentioned, all trader at the market sell the same kinds of goods at the same price. That's why it is very important for customers to choose not only the goods they need but also the trader from whom they will buy them. When customers make a purchase, they take into account the trader's personality and his social relationships. This is valid especially in the case of petty traders who come from rural areas where social relationships are directly reflected in their business. During her working hours, from 8 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Sake was visited by 34 customers. 26 of them were relatives, relatives-in-law and friends from her rural area. While accidental customers just buy and soon leave, familiar people sit down and talk with Sake keeping their stuff in her shop. They sometimes use their social relationships to ask her for a service. It is an important activity for traders to give to their customers a little bit more than they paid for in order to keep good relationships and continue their petty trade. However, sometimes there happen to come quite troublesome customers as well. On the day of my visit, for example, one customer said he bought goods only from Sake's shop at the Market and although he paid just for 1kg of sugar, he asked her to give him 1 piece of soup for free. She consented unwillingly. It is a kind of obligation because her business depends on her customers. She earned 70 birr on that day.

Most of the customers who come to the market are rural Borana. They are people like Sake, who are deeply related with the rural area and can establish their business on the grounds of their social relationship in the rural area.

As we could see, Borana petty traders gradually build their life strategy through trading. In Dubuluk merchandise market, 91% of the people who sell A) miscellaneous goods and B) preferable goods are women living in town. 58% of the people are Borana women. Borana petty traders have been increasing in recent years. Although they are still a small number of people, merchants living in villages near the town have appeared.³ Women traders at the market said, there was no other work for them except for trading in town. Their husbands' work is not enough for raising the big number of children they have. Most of the women traders are wives of men with low incomes. Their husbands do not have livestock. Even if they have some, they entrust a part of their livestock to relatives living in the rural area. The possibility for men to get a stable job in the town in order to support their family is extremely limited. Shop management and other stable jobs for which one needs an academic background have already been occupied by people from other ethnic groups. Except for agriculture husbands of women traders are also engaged in trading. It is impossible to live in town only on land cultivation because of scarce and unstable rainfalls in Borana. There are also women who do not have husbands because of death or divorce as it is in the case of Sake. Market activities give Borana people the opportunity to live in the town even without academic background, capital and livestock..

The Islamization in Urban Borana

Life of urban Borana is based not on pastoral but on monetary economy which is connected with life in town and market economy. It's not only their way of living which is different. They have been thoroughly separating from the traditional Borana pastoral culture. Rural Borana lead a social life based on clanship. They manage their water wells, meetings and ceremonies; they solve their problems, and help poor people in the clanship. They also talk about their problems and help each other in each village. In contrast, urban Borana do not have such social relationships and ties based on Borana culture (*aada-Borana*). What are the uniting bonds for urban Borana then?

Urban Borana currently started to practice other custom instead of Borana culture in town. It is Muslim culture (*aada-isulaama*). On the one hand, almost all Borana living in rural society practice their native religion, *waaqa*. On the other hand, Borana living in urban society have converted into Muslim. Once Borana people become Muslims, they obey Muslim cultural pattern. I will describe the Islamization among urban Borana by introducing the case of Soodda town.

Today, 53% of Borana people who have immigrated in Soodda have converted into Muslim. In the beginning of Soodda Islamization, one Somali ,his name is Ali Ilumi played a major role in this process. He came from Somalia to help Italy in 1935. After colonial time, he remained in Borana-land, settling down in Soodda and starting salt business. He was married to three Borana women in succession and had a lot of

³ In February at Dubuluk market, I made a study on petty traders selling common goods and luxury goods. I asked 158 persons and got answers from 118 of them about a) home area, b) ethnicity, c) the length of trading experience, and d) religion.

children. The Islamization in Soodda started from Ali family. He was the first immigrant and pioneer of salt business. It is certain that he had a great influence among immigrants.

In 1961, one Borana family immigrated to Soodda. Roba was 10 years old at that time. 5 years later, he became Muslim by his father's wish. Roba and his brothers were one of the first Borana immigrants who converted into Muslim. In 1966, his father said to him:

Islam is good. Now, there are many Muslims in the settlement. You should become a Muslim. Islam culture (*aada-islama*) is similar to Borana culture (*aada-Borana*). Muslims do not eat dead cattle, do not kill and hit people just like Borana culture, like *aba-gada* (a political leader of Borana), like *qaallu* (a spiritual leader of Borana). Now, Islam is better than Borana. Become a Muslim.

His father pointed out the similarity between Borana culture and Islam to persuade him to be Muslim. Finally, his father tried to make him acknowledge that Islam is better than Borana. Moreover, in the 1960's Islamization had already permeated into Soodda. His father recognized Islam as the new social standard instead of Borana culture.

Almost all Borana who immigrated to Soodda had lost their livestock before. They had to enter monetary economy which is quite different from pastoral economy. In the case of Soodda, people in the core of the society belong to other ethnic groups. How do Borana incorporate with them? How do they live and adapt to different customs and a situation quite new for them? Islam gives the answers to all these questions. Islam was the means of adaptation which helped Borana adjust to the new conditions. Roba said, "I am Borana, Islam is just a religion." But he also said that if his daughter gets married, her husband should be a Muslim. One Borana man converted into Muslim in 1980's because all people around him were Muslims. He felt lonely so he chose Islam to overcome this feeling.

There are 100 householders who were born in rural society and immigrated to Soodda from the 1960's to the 1990's. They are the first generation of Borana immigrants. 39 householders of the first generation are Muslim. 5 of them had already converted into Muslim before immigrating to Soodda because they came from Mega where Islamization spread earlier than in any other place in Borana-land. Among the remaining 34 householders who became Muslims in Soodda, 25 persons chose Islam by their own will and 9 persons became Muslims because of marriage. In the second generation, 37 of the all 48 householders are Muslims. 12 persons inherited Islam from their parents. 17 persons became Muslims through marriage. 8 persons chose Islam by themselves. In the third generation, 1 of 7 persons chose Islam by their own will and 6 persons inherited Muslim from their family. People who decided to become Muslims by their own will are 41% through all generations. This phenomenon is remarkable since the 1980's. On the other hand, 51% of all Borana Muslims became such by family succession or marriage. In case of marriage, this phenomenon is observed not only among women, but also among men.

Islamization among urban Borana has been spreading and has established a ruling-class clan to which belong people from various other clans. Borana people convert into Muslim in order to incorporate with the new society. Islamization among Borana people functions as a social strategy in the town. At the same time, it assures the cultural ties instead of Borana culture.

The Rise of Urban and Rural Identity in Borana

According to the research Hjørt made in Isiolo town of Kenya in 1979, there are many communities formed on the basis of different ethnic identity. He analyzed town society by focusing on socio-economical relationships based on each cultural rural tie. In Borana-land of South Ethiopia today, there are many towns in pastoral area. However, there are no communities based on ethnic identity. Similarly to the Borana people living in Isiolo, urban Borana in Ethiopia do not identify themselves by differentiating from other ethnic groups. They try to find their identity in differences between themselves and the rural Borana. Rural-Borana also do so.

Urban Borana tend to look down on rural Borana as poor and undeveloped people. On the other hand, rural Borana consider urban Borana as people who have lost their Borana culture. Although urban and rural Borana are economically interdependent on each other, they also tend to differentiate from each other. Each of them tries to establish their own identity through the “urban and rural” differentiation in their daily relationship. The Islamization among urban Borana has played a very important role for forming the urban society. At the same time, it has become a part of the urban Borana’s identity.

Rural Borana find their identity in the image of the “traditional Borana” and regard urban Borana as people who reject and loose their tradition. For rural and urban Borana, people who should be differentiated from them are not other ethnic groups or foreigners who are far distanced from them, but people who live nearby, inside of Borana. We need to observe both urban and rural Borana in terms of inter-relation and inter-differentiation in order to understand their society and culture today.

References

- Anders Hjørt. 1979. *Savanna town—rural ties and urban opportunities in Northern Kenya*—, Department of Social Anthropology: university of Stockholm
- Abdulah, A., Shongalo. 1994, “The Gumi Gayyoo Assembly of the Boran: A traditional legislative organ and its relationship to the Ethiopian state and a modernizing world.” *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 119
- Baxter, P., T. W. Hultin, Jan. and Triulzi, Alessandro. 1996, *Being and Becoming Oromo Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*, First Red Sea Press.
- Coppock, D., Layne. 1994, *The Boran plateau of southern Ethiopia*, ILCA.
- Darl Gudren. and Hjørt, A. 1976, *Having hard: Pastoral Herd Growth and Household Economy*, University of Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology, No.2
- Darl Gudren. 1979, *Suffering Grass*, Dept of social anthropology: University of Stockholm
- Douglas, H., Johnson. and David, M., Anderson. 1988, *The Ecology of Survival Case Study from Northeast African History*, Lester Crook Academic Publishing.
- Donaldson, T., J. 1986, *Pastoralism and droughts: a case of the Boran of southern Ethiopia*, PHD dept of agriculture and horticulture: UK.
- Hatinson, S. 1996 *Nuer Dilemma*, California University Press
- Holden, Sharon, J. Coppock, D., Layne. 1992, “Effect of distance to market, season and family wealth on pastoral daily marketing in Ethiopia.” *Journal of Arid Environments*
- Holden, Sharon, J. 1991, “Pastoral dairy marketing and household wealth interaction and their implications for calves and humans in Ethiopia.” *Human Ecology*

- Helland, T. 1984, "Pastoralists and the development pastoralism." *African Savannah studies, Occasional Paper* ; no. 20
- Klukhon, Richard. 1960, "The Konso economy of southern Ethiopia." *Market in Africa*
- Oba Chikage. 2006, *The cultural change of Borana in 20th century*, unpublished MA thesis in Kyoto Prefectural university
- Pancharst, Richard. 1965, "The trade of southern and western Ethiopia and the Indian ocean parts in nineteen and early centuries." *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol3, no1, 36-81
- Tilahun, Negussie. 1984. "Household Economic study in Borana and Estimation of Expenditure Elasticities from a sample of Borana household." *Ethiopia pastoral systems study research report*, No15, ILCA.

When Pastoral Commons are Privatised: Resource Deprivation and Changes in Land Tenure Systems among the Karrayu in the Upper Awash Valley Region of Ethiopia

Ayalew Gebre¹

The traditional migratory pastoral mode of existence of the Karrayu has come under increasing pressure over the last half century. With the process of land privatising underway, the well-watered sections of these neighbourhoods have almost entirely been enclosed and held by individual herdsmen. This paper attempts to examine the process of transformation of the traditional resource tenural arrangements and its various implications for Karrayu pastoral adaptations.

Owing to the physical geography of the region they inhabit, the subsistence base of the Karrayu is heavily dependent on nomadic pastoralism and exploitation of natural resources, marked by spatial and seasonal variations. Nevertheless, the traditional migratory pastoral mode of existence has come under increasing pressure over the last half century particularly from the ever expanding and 'disempowering' development interventions in the region such as large-scale agricultural enterprises and conservation schemes². In response to changing circumstances and resulting pressures, the Karrayu in certain neighbourhoods have tended to sedentarise and take up farming. The fundamental changes have to do with the growth of agriculture and the associated changes in land tenure mainly in better-watered areas and at certain locations along the banks of the Awash River which are suitable for irrigated agriculture. The implication of the shift is that changes have also taken place in the traditional mode of pastoralism and the pattern of land use. Hence, the inhabitants of neighbourhoods in Abadir and Gelcha³ areas now exploit privately enclosed land for agriculture and controlled grazing, rather than the customary communally held ranges. With the process of land privatising underway, the well-watered sections of these neighbourhoods have almost entirely been enclosed and held by individual herdsmen. In the light of the forgoing, this paper attempts to examine the process of transformation of the traditional resource tenural arrangements and its various implications for Karrayu pastoral adaptations.

Much has been said about resource deprivation and socio-economic changes among pastoral groups in the Awash Valley region (Lane, 1996; Tibebe, 1997; Muderis, 1998; Getachew, 1999). Certainly, the state-sponsored land alienation and the threats for still further encroachments have entailed significant transformations in the traditional pastoral land tenure arrangements. However, the correlation between these two aspects of change has not been adequately treated in previous discussions on the subject. One possible explanation for this is that the studies may have been intended to focus on other

¹ Assistant Professor of Development Anthropology, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University.

² In the context of the Karrayu, these development schemes are constituted by transnational companies such as the Dutch firm Handels-Vereeniging Amsterdam (H.V.A), the Nura Era Plantation (NEP), the Abadir Fruit and Sugar Plantation (AFSP) as the Awash National Park (ANP).

³ These are two of the five settlement areas called **nano** by the Karrayu. Together with the other three, Fentale, Merti, and Elala, they form the Karrayu territory (Biya Karrayu).

dimensions of the transformation process. As a result, little scholarly attention has recently focused on how state actions on land affect the tenure structure and how people respond to this and the manifestation of such a transformation in the land tenure. This study is essentially intended to redress this neglect of the subject. Therefore, as land-use patterns in pastoral areas have changed, particularly with the growth of agriculture and development of enclosures, not only have the traditional patterns of settlement changed, but also people's fundamental relationship to and attitude towards land. Wherever there is agriculture, mobility has declined and people have become permanent settlers on the land. This has led to a new emphasis on land ownership and territoriality which has its own implications for a wide variety of land-use issues and the traditional pastoral land tenure arrangement. It has introduced a new sort of competition to enclose communal grazing land for private use.

The Karrayu

The Karrayu who are the indigenous inhabitants of the Metehara Plain and Mount Fentale area are Oromo-speaking transhumant pastoralists. Apart from livestock herding, the Karrayu who inhabit certain home neighborhoods have also started practicing both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture. This is a recent but growing tendency that emerged in the early 1980s and continued to develop ever since. It begun mainly as a response to the expropriation of their pastoral land and the subsequent weakening of the pastoral means of livelihood.

The Karrayuland is located on the edge of what may be referred to as the Upper Valley of the Awash River Basin⁴. It lies at an altitude of not more than 1000 meters above sea level falling to 955 meters at Metehara Plain and rising as high as 2007 meters at Mount Fentale, which is the highest elevation in the region. The neighbors of the Karrayu are the Afar Debine⁵ in the North, Arsi Oromo in the South, the Awash National Park in the East and beyond the Park the Ittu of West Harrerge, the Argoba in the West, and the Amhara in the district of Berehet in the southwest.

Up until the late 1940's and early 1950's the dominant land users of what is called the Fentale district and the Metehara plain had been the Karrayu pastoralists. After this period, however, several large-scale plantations, mostly managed by foreign agribusiness in joint venture with the State, were set up in the area. Primarily, the Dutch firm Handels Vereniging Amsterdam (H.V.A.) established the Wonji Shoa and Metehara Sugar estate in the Upper Valley. Likewise, the Awash National Park was legally established by the State in 1969 in the Upper Awash Valley on an area of 80,000 hectares. This national park located between Matehara and Awash Station enclosed a vast area of dry and wet season grazing which was in the past used by the Karrayu pastoralists. This new phenomenon entailed serious consequences for the indigenous Karrayu pastoralists by depriving them of access to grazing land, which they used in critical periods of time. The establishment of the irrigation schemes and the Awash National Park changed the traditional land use patterns of the Karrayu and has significantly altered the land rights of the pastoralists entailing significant changes in the land tenure system.

⁴ The classification of the Awash River Basin as the Upper, the Middle, and the Lower valleys was made by the former Awash Valley Authority (AVA) in order to oversee the various agro-industrial projects that operated in the area.

⁵ Debine - One of the biggest federations of Afar clans inhabiting the southwest rangelands in the Middle Awash.

Transformation of the Tenure System: An Overview

Land in the Karrayu area has been administered by customary law. Increasingly, however, with the expansion of the population size, largely precipitated by the continued influx and systematic incursions of more and more Ittu⁶ into the area and the expansion of the agricultural frontier, the land-use and tenural arrangements are undergoing a major transformation. In this paper, I argue that land expropriation was not the only consequence of the introduction of state-sponsored agricultural and wildlife conservation schemes in Karrayu land. It also had a negative effect on the traditional communal spirit of Karrayu's resource use. For one thing, the phenomenon stimulated a tendency among some pastoral households to prefer individual tenure, particularly those in better-watered neighbourhoods where they have started practising some form of individual agriculture. Furthermore, frictions that were not previously common over the use and sharing of grazing resources developed in the Karrayu social structure as private restrictions increased due to the continued shrinkage of the land and as more and more pieces of it were enclosed. Hence, the traditional values of consensus on the question of land-use and tenure that had once governed Karrayu communal resource management began to be eroded in the face of encroachment from commercial agriculture and wildlife reserves. Thus, 'communal' land tenure arrangements are increasingly changing in the direction of privatised range areas. The major manifestations of this change are the growth in land enclosures associated with opportunistic farming and as grazing reserves. Competition to enclose good arable land is increasingly advancing. The previous communal grazing areas, which during the wet-seasons used to serve as relief for their home-based herds, are nowadays turned into cultivated/enclosed lands. The change is not always smooth. It is sometimes accompanied by conflicts.

Over the last twenty-five to thirty years, Ittu migrants from West Harrerge have introduced the practice of farming and permanent settlement in the Karrayu territory with major consequences to the traditional land tenure arrangements there. To this end, the Ittu embarked on the clearing and enclosing of the previously communal access rangeland areas. Land thus enclosed and privatised for agricultural use is called *qonna*, and that fenced off for grazing is referred to as *kello*.

Worried that their entire traditional pasture land will eventually be lost to the Ittu farmers and other expanding commercial farms, the Karrayu also took to fencing off large areas of land for farming and mostly as dry-season grazing reserves. This development has gradually led to a large number of once communally held lands being demarcated for two major purposes. First, by so doing, the Karrayu hope to prevent their territory from being transformed into farmland by the ever-increasing influx of Ittu migrants. The concern on the part of the Karrayu is that the more land is enclosed and thereby privatised for farming, the less land will be available for communal grazing. Secondly, the *kello* (land enclosure as grazing reserves) are principally intended to facilitate what might be termed as land speculation (see Little, 1992). This practice refers to the competition for reserving as much land as is available for future use before there will no longer be land for enclosure. The trend has resulted in the fencing off as much land as individuals can possibly have access to regardless of their grazing requirements.

⁶ The Ittu are predominantly agro-pastoralists inhabiting the highlands of West Harrerge, mainly Habro District. Most Ittu inhabitants inside the Karrayu territory migrated there over the last forty years, particularly since the mid 1970s. Their migration was mainly caused by the droughts of 1973/74 and 1984/85 and the recurrent inter-ethnic clashes with the Issa Somali.

The situation at present is that some villagers have enclosed sizeable portions of communal grazing land which they protect against animals belonging to other herders, and effectively use them to graze their own stock. In other cases, individuals have fenced off extensive areas as farmland, although they may not manage to exploit the enclosures effectively due to their large sizes. The fences of such big enclosures soon collapse leaving behind little trace of identification so that the individuals assign relatives to look after the fields when they have to journey away to cattle camps in migration areas. Although domestic herds may in general have access to these places as there are no fences around them and farming has not yet begun, 'ownership' of the area still belongs to the individuals who put up the fences first. Hence, relatives or fellow villagers forbid attempts by others to privatise the area by saying that it belongs to other occupants.

Under circumstances whereby a man is not able to put up a fence around an area of land that he intends to privatise, he cuts down the trees in the vicinity leaving the trunks at half-length. Then he uses the parts to mark off the land by spacing stakes, twenty-five to fifty metres apart. Anyone who happens to come around looking for land to enclose turns away or passes by at the sight of the markings. Of course, grazing is permitted for all animals as long as the ownership rights of the first man to privatise the area are recognised. The first man to enclose and privatise the area is entitled to use it for the grazing of his own stock and for cultivation. He may also pass a limited portion of the enclosure on to friends and relatives if he so wishes. Still, the proliferation of fencing symbolises the widespread competition for land and tenure insecurity in the area which came about largely as a result of pressure and encroachment by outsiders.

The above two practices, especially the staking out of a large part of communal grazing land for private use, are engaged in out of fear that all available land will gradually be lost to others if the partitioning continues at the present alarming rate. It is, therefore, a strategy adopted to get hold of as much of the communal land as can be privatised by way of enclosing and fencing it off before others can do likewise. As the Karrayu explain, they resorted to setting up grazing enclosures due to increasing pressures on their resource-base. Their once vast traditional grazing land was progressively reduced due to the encroachments by ever-expanding commercial farms. The remaining limited territory came under further pressure due to overpopulation by a growing influx of largely Ittu migrants and others such as the Somali⁷, Minjar Amhara⁸ and plantation workers of different ethnic origins. Not only did the migrants take up settlements there, but they also graze their livestock on the Karrayu land left of what was expropriated by the development enterprises. People began to enclose areas of land in a bid to protect their individual plots from trampling, and thereby grow suitable pasture for their domestic herds.

Particularly in the Abadir Area (Nano Abadir) there seems to be hardly any land that has not been privatised. The expansion of irrigated cultivation in this area by the Karrayu as well as others has made land scarce for grazing to the point that animals can

⁷ The Somali settlers (Issa and Gadabursi) in Karrayu territory migrated to the area starting towards the end of the era of Emperor Menelik II as railway workers when the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway was under construction. Later, their number continued to grow as their relatives and kinsmen travelled over to visit them and took permanent settlement there. As with the Ittu, the Somali also inter-marry with the Karrayu and the affinal ties thus created have been another factor for the increase of the Somali inhabitants whose number has now reached close to 2,000 living in about 100 homesteads.

⁸ These are migrants from the highlands of Minjar, Bulga District in North Shoa. The immigrants now inhabit the northern part of the Town of Metehara which has come to be called Minjar Sefer (quarter).

find barely enough space to move around let alone feed themselves. To onlookers, the area gives the appearance that it has been apportioned and distributed to occupants just as is the case with urban land in the towns. Land enclosure for individual cultivation hastened the rate at which pastoral commons were converted into private tenure regimes. As a consequence of the intensive agricultural ventures of the commercial farms and increasing crop cultivation practised by Karrayu inhabitants, the area has reached a stage where it can no longer be used for pastoral purposes. The Karrayu cattle herders in this area retain their pastoral mode of subsistence by putting their livestock under the care of their kinsmen or affines living in distant settlements. Karrayu households with large families, on the other hand, manage to carry out cultivation in their Abadir villages, and cattle herding in migration areas (*beke deda*⁹) far away by appropriately dividing the household labour between the two economic activities.

It appears that wealthy herd owners in particular are affected by this development. The large size of their livestock prohibits their return to the neighbourhoods even in the wet-season. Not only is there the problem of space to keep the herds back in the neighbourhoods, but also the possibility of conflicts occurring when livestock trespasses into grazing enclosures belonging to individual villagers. Thus, rich pastoralists are forced to stay away in migration areas or along the frontiers of neighbouring groups throughout the wet and dry seasons. Loss of access to these wet-season pasture areas has disrupted the whole rotational grazing system, effectively reducing the pastoral productive capacity of the whole district, in addition to the direct impact of the commercial farms. This loss has resulted in a drastic reduction of livestock numbers and a steep decline in production which the Karrayu say has caused them great suffering. Consequently, these herdsmen are hostile towards Ittu migrants whose arrival and settlement were accompanied by the recent phenomenon of spontaneous privatisation and land speculation. The Karrayu even complain that the situation has become so serious that they are finding it hard to get an appropriate site for the celebration of their age-old Gada rituals, let alone grazing sites for their animals.

Another factor, more important in the eyes of the Karrayu, which has contributed to the transformation of the tenure system, has been the loss of sizeable parts of rangeland to private and state development schemes and to wildlife Park. The uncertainty that more land will still be expropriated as the schemes continue to expand seems to be increasing the pressure on the already disintegrating traditional tenure arrangements and resource management institutions. As studies show (Anderson and Grove, 1987; Little, 1992), since the state directly controls a great number of these development schemes, it can be said that it plays an important role in the transformation process by undermining the power and autonomy of local organisations traditionally entrusted with resource management responsibilities. The weakening and gradual disintegration of such local functions leaves an expanding void of which non-herders from urban centres, especially Metehara Town, take great advantage. Pastoral resources outside the control of the development schemes are gradually coming in the possession of urban-based traders and herd owners who exploit the uncertainty surrounding pastoral land rights. The Minjar and Argoba¹⁰ who are urban residents in Metehara Town and some employees in the nearby commercial farms are putting up claims to the ownership and use of grazing resources and water points. Important also is the progressive enclosure of land for the

⁹ *Beke deda* or distant migration areas are temporary settlements where cattle camps are located and Karrayu pastoralists spend the dry season.

¹⁰ The Argoba are the western neighbors of the Karrayu.

purpose of farming by these urban-based herd owners who continue to compete with the Karrayu pastoralists for the remaining limited pastoral resources.

Due to this shortage of farm plots, the wealthier herd owners tend to exploit their affinal and consanguinal links so that they can obtain as much of the well-watered land as possible. They manage to obtain such plots from relatives who had earlier enclosed and possessed areas suitable for irrigated agriculture. Apart from this, an incipient land market is evolving and the practice of buying land in secret arrangements has also become increasingly common. Under such deals, one *qertie*¹¹ of land costs up to Birr 1,000. Of course, such transactions are made under strictly secret arrangements; buyer and seller must be intimate acquaintances. Such close relations between the two parties are essential for two reasons: first, if the buyer is an outsider to the area, there is the risk that the one selling the land may go back on the deal and continue to retain the plot after having received the payment. More often than not, the fellow villagers take sides with the seller rather than the buyer, which complicates matters for the wronged party. Secondly, selling and buying land is a violation of the law since land is considered state property which necessitates that the transaction be strictly confidential. Local authorities at the district (Woreda) and regional (Zone) levels advise and warn the community against such practices because if they continue and all land is sold out they will eventually be landless and displaced. In spite of this, however, there are a number of rich pastoralists who have managed to possess large tracts of land in different localities in the manner described.

The Spread of Agro-Pastoralism and Changes in Pastoral Land Tenure: A Glimpse at the Practices in Two Selected Karrayu Communities

The Karrayu have been practicing irrigated and rain-fed cultivation for the last fifteen to twenty years. The most important reasons behind their resort to crop cultivation is the increasing amount of pressure on land which put their pastoral mode of subsistence in crises. The alienation of a great part of their pastoral land for use by commercial farms and national park as well as the flooding of their grazing land by the ever-expanding Lake Beseka has contributed to their taking up cultivation as a coping mechanism. No less important, the settling inside the Karrayu territory particularly of the Ittu who migrated from West Harrerge has played a part in the overcrowding and overstocking of the already shrinking resource base. Thus, the resultant competition and confrontation over grazing resources which have themselves become considerably less than they were have caused the Karrayu to turn to cultivation of at least their staple crop, maize. Moreover, fear and concern that their remaining land would still be expropriated, if uncultivated, has been another factor, as they put it, in the change of their economic adaptation and diversification into farming.

The Karrayu practice their cultivation, what some refer to as opportunistic farming, in two ways. The first is irrigated cultivation carried out in the areas (*nano*¹²) of Gelcha, Merti, and Abadir. This is the expanding form of cultivation entirely dependent on the Awash River and surplus flow of irrigation water from the Metehara Sugar Estate and Nura Era Farm. The second is dry-land/rain-fed crop production, which is dependent on run off water that drains from the mountains or high grounds and is spread out to the

¹¹ *Qertie* is a local term, and signifies a piece of land of approximately one-quarter of a hectare.

¹² In the Karrayu pattern of settlement localities or home neighborhoods numbering five to ten on the average together form a settlement area (**nano**). There are five such areas (**nano**) in the Karrayu territory, namely, Nano Gelcha, Nano Fentale, Nano Abadir, Nano Elala, and Nano Merti.

nearby fields through crude water spreading techniques. Without the run off water thus obtained, the climate of the area characterized by low rainfall and high temperature would not have made possible any rain-fed crop production. Such type of “take-a-chance” (Dahl, 1981:204) farming which is dependent on rainfall and the resulting flood involves a great deal of risk. For one thing, seeds are sown in anticipation of rains (dry planting) or after witnessing their onset. Then, the floods are diverted so as to water the fields. However, it so often occurs that the rains fail to pour in amounts or for durations that had been anticipated causing the crops to dry up prematurely. In other cases, the rains may fall so heavily that floods result and inundate the fields sweeping away or destroying the crops.

The resort to farming activities has meant that their traditional land tenure arrangements have undergone significant changes and modifications. And one way to understand this process of transformation is to look local inhabitants of a particular village or group of villages where the practice of land enclosing for purpose of different forms of cultivation takes place. In order to address the issues with typical enriching material, two carefully selected and representative community case studies have been presented and analyzed. These cases deal with neighborhoods where irrigated cultivation is largely the practice. I have the conviction that the use of community case material will not only round out the investigation on transformation of the tenure system but will also elucidate the functions and workings of the phenomenon. It is also hoped that the cases will shed some light on the dynamic of pastoral land tenure and the agricultural modes of adaptations that the Karrayu cattle-herders resort to whenever circumstances require it and are opportune. With respect to possible derivations from the case material presented, I have also included remarks and reflections on fundamental concepts of some theoretical relevance.

The Case of Dire Sedan

I begin the discussion by briefly examining the processes which led to the settlement and cultivation practice by the Karrayu herders in Dire Sedan. Dire Sedan is a home neighborhood in the Abadir area (Nano Abadir). The inhabitants are mainly Karrayu, Ittu, and small number of Shoa Oromo called Chore who arrived from the vicinities of Wulinchitie, Boset district.

The continued expansion of the Metehara Sugar Estate kept displacing the Karrayu pushing them further and further until they reached the Dire Sedan peripheral area covered with bushes and forests. Members of the Ittu and Chore groups introduced farming in this area by clearing forest lands and hoeing the ground until they later started ox-drawn cultivation since 1985. These groups are used to farming as they practiced it to some extent in their previous settlements. Observing the benefits these cultivators could derive from their plots, the native Karrayu also started to enclose areas of land for cultivation.

Those Karrayu who first started cultivation in the Dire Sedan area occupied as much as one or two hectares of land depending on their capacity to practice farming. As more and more of the pastoral commons were converted to individual plots of land, the demand for cultivable land increased. Thus, others who wanted to take up cultivation had to be confined to less than one hectare.

The Karrayu in the Dire Sedan area use small portion of their farm enclosure for the cultivation of maize, which is their staple crop. They sharecrop the remaining large portion of their enclosure to workers in the state farms and others from the nearby towns

who want to hire land for cultivation on sharecropping arrangements with the Karrayu 'land occupants'. The following are the five common forms of sharecropping and/or land mortgaging agreements that have been gleaned from the in-depth interviews carried out with one of my key informants.¹³

1. In the first form of the contract, the Karrayu 'land occupant' rents his plot of land, sometimes with a pair of oxen, to someone wanting to cultivate produces for the market. The one hiring the plot (the sharecropper) agrees to cover all the expenses for the agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pest chemicals, and seed varieties) and farm related activities such as weeding, tending, and watering. When the produces have been harvested and sold, he deducts all his expenses and equally shares the profit with the Karrayu 'land occupant'. The Karrayu are losing interest in this type of arrangement since some of those who hire the land claim to have made more expenses than they naturally have and thus minimize the share that goes to occupant.
2. The second type of contract is exactly a reverse of the first. In this case, the Karrayu occupant hires labor rather than rent out 'his plot'. He covers all the expenses needed for farm inputs, and a laborer who is used to cultivation performs all the farm activities. After harvest, the Karrayu occupant calculates all the expenses he made for the inputs and then equally splits the profit between him and the laborer.
3. The third type of contract is an arrangement under which both parties equally share all the expenses needed for the inputs, work together on the plot and divide the profits equally between them accordingly. This arrangement offers no special or additional benefit to Karrayu occupying the plot. Such an arrangement is entered into because the land is not desirable for cultivation due to its being marginal and less productive.
4. There are three parties to the fourth type of contract; the one renting the plot (the 'Karrayu occupant'), the man carrying out all the farm activities and the individual who 'invest' his cash on farm inputs. Thus, the Karrayu sometimes acts as a guard of the plot besides letting it is used for cultivation, while the second party takes care of the actual farm work such as ploughing and tending. In addition to making available all the agricultural inputs, the third party may cover the costs of hired labor for the farm if it is needed. Cash profits in this arrangement are equally shared out among the three parties after all the expenses incurred for the inputs and additional labor have first been calculated and returned to the 'investor'.
5. The fifth form of arrangement is land mortgaging. This is an arrangement under which a Karrayu who holds a plot of land manages to borrow an amount of cash from a moneylender. An agreement is made to the effect that provided the borrower is unable to pay off his debts within a period of time, he will temporarily transfer his plot of land to the lender to use for a certain number of production seasons. Hence, land mortgaging is a practice whereby land is conditionally transferred from its holder to a moneylender who, in many cases, is an outsider engaged himself in different forms of sharecropping. Under the terms of this arrangement, the defaulter has his plot of land taken away by the lender who uses it in the manner of his choosing until his cash is paid back. Thus, the loan will be interest-free, while it

¹³ The data on the various forms of contracts adopted by the Karrayu in Dire Sedan home neighborhood and other people was collected during several interviews conducted with an elderly local. He chairs a self-initiated Water Management Committee set up by community members to ensure a fair distribution of irrigation water among the cultivating pastoralists. The interviewee was identified as a key informant by virtue of the fact that he is knowledgeable and experienced in providing historical and ethnographic information.

affords the lender an access to a piece of cultivating land and allows the borrower a limited time to get the cash for debt settlement. If, though, the borrower remains unable to clear the debt during the period allowed, the lender will not wait indefinitely but rather will retain the mortgaged land permanently. Rich Karrayu livestock owners also enter into land mortgaging arrangements with their fellow cultivating pastoralists. Thus, by buying land mortgages in the form of cash loans, many wealthy Karrayu herdsman are getting richer as they expanded their land holdings and fields under cultivation.

Although the Karrayu in the Dire Sedan area practice cultivation in the manner discussed earlier, pastoralism continues to be the dominant mainstay of their subsistence economy. Thus, they carry out the two activities side by side and this requires them to allocate the available household manpower as effectively as possible. The rich pastoralists are often found to be more polygynous and it is quite common and necessary for such herders to take multiple wives and to have many children for taking care of the various pastoral activities. Wealthy herd owners can usually afford to support polygenous households, which they utilize as a strategy to cope with their manpower needs. This is especially the case with rich pastoralists engaged in activities such as crop cultivation besides livestock herding and who consider it sound strategy to have access to both economic niches.

The Case of Algea

Algea is one of the localities found along the banks of the Awash River and is situated East of Abadir, and southeast of Addis Ketema. It used to be one of the suitable watering sites (*melka*¹⁴) on the Awash banks, which the Karrayu used before the establishment of concession farms in the area. Besides, the place was a home village for some Karrayu households.

By the end of the 1960s this area was handed over to a concessionaire who launched small-scale cotton farming there. The intervention later led to conflict between plantation guards and Karrayu cattle herders who brought their livestock to the farm. After the concessionaire had operated the farm for some years, the *Derg*¹⁵ regime nationalized it following the downfall of the Imperial Government. Although the farmland came under state control, the area, nevertheless, remained uncultivated for sometime until 1981/1982. During this period, some Karrayu and Ittu men began land clearing in order to carry out crop cultivation. As a result of this, the government body then responsible for rural settlements organized these men, together with impoverished Karrayu women and other settlers from different places, under a 'farmers association'. Following this, the members of the association took up cultivation in their respective enclosed areas. To water their fields, the cultivators on the Algea area continue to rely on the surplus flow of irrigated water from the Metehara Sugar Estate which they divert through furrows from the irrigation canal.

Nevertheless, the salty nature of the water at Lake Beseka located around Algea and the small size of pasture land available because of the ever expanding cane plantations in the area, livestock keeping became increasingly difficult for the Karrayu pastoralists

¹⁴ *Melka* – A site on a river bank suitable for watering domestic herds.

¹⁵ Also called 'the Provisional Military Administrative Council' (PMAC), the *Derg* was a military junta that came to power in Ethiopia in September 1974. It established a Marxist military government and ruled the country for 17 years (1974–1991). The *Derg* was deposed by rebel forces that seized power in May 1991.

in the locality. Because of this, many of the Karrayu who possessed land in this area favored cattle herding over crop production. Hence, except for the few Karrayu who chose to stay and continue with cultivation, many of them left the area to take care of their cattle in distant pastures hiring their enclosures to others. Sharecropping arrangements of the Algea take three different forms and, as the terms of contract indicate the agreements entered into reflect the traditional land tenure practices common in the central highlands. The wordings and references used in connection with the arrangements strongly suggest that they were applied by highlanders who moved to the area as plantation workers or for other purposes. In fact, the information in this case material was obtained from one of such individuals who migrated here from a highland region in search of wage employment. The different forms of contractual arrangements in this locality take the following three forms as described by the said informant¹⁶.

‘Yäkul’¹⁷: - The term shows that there is an equal share of profits under this arrangement. The Karrayu with a plot of land rents it to someone with money and oxen. The second party works on the plot by making available all the necessary inputs in addition to oxen and labor. When crops especially tomatoes, onions, and watermelons, are harvested the expenses that the ‘investor’ has made are first calculated before the two parties equally share the profits.

‘Arat Ànd’ (Érbo¹⁸): - Under this arrangement, there are three parties and the profit from the sale of the produce is divided into four parts. Two parts of the profit go to the Karrayu who rents ‘his’ land. One part is taken by the individual with cash and oxen and who hires a laborer as a third party to the arrangement. The laborer, in turn, carries out the cultivation with other workers under him. This third party receives the fourth part of the profit, which represents only one quarter of the returns from the sale. Before the profit is thus apportioned, the ‘investor’ calculates and deducts the costs of inputs, labor, and oxen.

‘Sost Ànd’ (Siso¹⁹): - Karrayu ‘land occupant’ in this situation leases his plot of land for a year or two or even three depending upon a mutual agreement. The sharecropper who takes over the plot on lease pays for it from Birr 600 up to Birr 1000 which payment varies according to the size of the plot, its fertility, and the suitability of the location for the flow of water from the irrigation canals. The contractor buys the inputs, provides the oxen, and hires labor for the cultivation. A third partner to the agreement, who, besides ploughing the land, is helped by additional hired labor for tending and watering the field, carries out the actual work of cultivating the land. When the produce

¹⁶ At one point during my stay in this home neighborhood, I was surprised to find a typical highlander engaged in farm activities in the heart of Karrayu territory (Algea). Fascinated by his non-pastoral appearance and particularly native accent in the dialect of Amharic he spoke I asked him if he had come from Wollo region. In the middle of the conversation which then ensued, I was astonished to learn that the man had not only come from exactly the same village as my relations lived, but actually knew one of my immediate parents too. The unexpected incident made it easier to put queries to the individual concerning his background and present circumstances. So I put to him that, being a native of the Wollo highlands, how he could occupy farm land a long way down here where it is so overcrowded and scarce. In reply, he explained to me that he had been a wage laborer at Metehara Sugar Estate for a period of time since his arrival here. However, after losing his employment in one of the Estate’s layoffs, he was forced to take up cultivation on the basis of a sharecropping arrangement with Karrayu cultivating pastoralists. He then narrated a whole range of sharecropping arrangements in which he and his fellow migrants are involved, as well as other related developments.

¹⁷ Yäkul- As used in the context of the traditional land tenure system in northcentral highlands, the term refers to a sharecropping agreement in return for one-half of the produce.

¹⁸ Érbo- As used in the same context, this is a sharecropping agreement in return for one-fourth of the produce.

¹⁹ Siso- A sharecropping agreement in return for one-third of the produce.

has been gathered and sold all the expenses that have gone into the farm work are first calculated and returned to the contractor. He then collects one half, i.e., two quarters of the earnings in his position as the temporary occupant of the plot on lease. The remaining one half or two quarters is again equally divided and one part is given to the 'investor' for contributing the cash. The last quarter of the profit goes to the third partner who contributed his labor and serves as a chief workman on the plot.

Discussion of the Cases

With the systematic process of alienation of prime grazing land, displacement of the pastoralists into marginal areas, and the curtailment of their mobility came the gradual sedentarisation, land enclosure and privatization and engagement in opportunistic farming. Farming particularly is increasingly becoming an economic alternative for many Karrayu households, as is the case particularly in better-watered neighborhoods such as Abadir. Therefore, among the Karrayu it was the poor, who had lost their core livestock and thus almost sloughed-off from the pastoral sector, to be the earliest to resort to farming. However, many of these poor pastoral households who have taken up agriculture could not sustain their farms because of their inability to generate and bear the costs involved. In addition, the rich herd owners have also in some areas started practicing agriculture. This group of pastoralists, unlike the poor ones, devote much of the time and household manpower in their pastoral pursuits and carry out agriculture on a sort of part time basis. These processes therefore led to the evolvement of a whole lot of changes in their traditional pastoral subsistence, some of which are:

Engagement in different forms of sharecropping and other land rental arrangements which at times may not be in their favor. The expansion of cultivation regime particularly irrigated farming in the neighborhoods very close to the Awash River has important implications for changes in the Karrayu pastoral land tenure systems. New land rental, and sharecropping arrangements including the use of hired labor, are evolving. The cases give evidence of a wide variant of contractual agreements that existed in the evolving tenure system in the surrounding areas. Different contractual arrangements over land in the areas demonstrate several things. First, there was a substantial degree of flexibility, which existed in the emerging tenure system in terms of what sort of arrangements regarding the use of land could be made. These contractual arrangements seem to expand over time to include share contracts and rentals as well as inheritance and, in some instances, sale. Secondly, pastoralists are making contractual arrangements that were not sanctioned by law. There is restriction in almost all Ethiopian governments' land laws on entering contracts over land without the approval of the concerned state agency.

The emergence of an incipient land market where land is sold, mortgaged and temporarily or permanently transferred between households within the pastoral group or with those from outside who possess the necessary capital such as farm oxen and liquid cash to buy the required farm inputs and hire labor;

Changes in the herd management (herding organization which alter with changed circumstances) of the cultivating pastoralists, who due to their engagement in agriculture, could not carry out their pastoral pursuits in traditional way. As a result, they see to it that their animals are herded through informal and semi-contractual arrangements such as cattle entrustment and share-rearing. In this case, the area of herding co-operation between families is extended to include more distant relatives and

friends; the basic economic unit is enlarged while its dependence on other such units increased. All these changes are part of the drive for greater economic viability.

The involvement of hired labor mainly to carry out the most laborious parts of the farm works particularly in the cultivation of cash crops such as tomato, onion, water melon and pepper which necessitate considerable labor in-put. This labor comes from the nearby towns and from among those who have been laid off by estate farms in the areas. Therefore, one distinguishing feature about agricultural production on such farms is that the pastoralists hire persons from agricultural background to do almost all the manual labor. The cultivating pastoralists particularly the rich herders, in addition to their strategy of maintaining their household manpower for exclusively pastoral engagements, still generally retain an aversion to doing farm work, and consequently such work is done by employees from non-pastoral groups.

Conclusion

Since the introduction of commercial farms and conservation development programmes, the Karrayu have been losing rights to many essential resources. This new situation also enabled territorial expansion of several agricultural peoples into Karrayu land. As a result, many Karrayu pastoralists were forced to assume sedentary or semi-sedentary residence in order to make or strengthen their claims over either wet or dry-season grazing areas. In the process, agriculture is becoming a new way of life among the Karrayu. Pastoralists are trying to adapt to new opportunities, contrary to the prevailing official thinking that they resist change. The Karrayu, particularly in the most populous neighbourhoods such as Abadir, have been transformed from largely transhumant pastoralists exploiting a communally owned range and have become settled pastoralists exploiting privately owned enclosures both for agricultural and grazing purposes.

Over the last fifty years, considerable changes have been taking place in Karrayu traditional ownership of grazing land. As a result, vast portion of the land left from what has been appropriated by expanding development schemes is enclosed and privatised by individual households. While much of the process has taken place in the wet regions that offer irrigation opportunities, it is now spilling over into neighbourhoods far removed from the Awash River basin. At present, communal land is available only on the margins, which, in the final analysis, will mean that there are going to be no more pastoral commons left at the end of the appropriation process.

The expansion of the cultivation regime, irrigated farming in particular, has important implication for Karrayu pastoralism, apart from possible changes in ideology. As discussed in the main text of the paper, the last two decades have seen continuing changes in what was traditionally communal Karrayu land tenure. In the wake of such changes and the introduction of small-scale agriculture have come new developments, i.e. land rent and different sharecropping arrangements. At the centre of such transformations is land and land-related factors. This refers mainly to a denial of access to what once was premium Karrayu grazing land and the subsequent evolution of different forms of land-use. The fact that, in association with these elements of change, varied forms of land-based contractual arrangements have established itself implies a number of things.

Under compelling or changing circumstances, the land tenure system manifests a high degree of flexibility giving way to the introduction and adoption of what could be described as 'alien' contractual land-use institutions. And in the course of time, these institutions continue to develop by assuming varied features which might be local in

their origin or borrowed from other agricultural areas. As a result, land leases, rentals, inheritances, and sales have become common arrangements under which the Karrayu carry out farm activities on a joint basis with other partners. In the process, an informal land market has emerged in which land is temporarily or permanently transferred between households within the pastoral group or outside it through sales or mortgages. Of course, the practice is still in its incipient stage, although there are indications that it will be expanding, given the present high demand for cultivable land. This change signifies the fact that land is assuming a commodity value as a means of production and exchange, which attribute it did not possess prior to the advent of cultivation. Another implication of agriculture as practised by the Karrayu has to do with its being carried out on land under no legal recognition of private ownership. Hence, the different forms of land transfer including sales are not sanctioned by state law. Indeed, all pastoral land is declared 'state land' in the constitutions of successive Ethiopian governments. Thus, any contractual arrangement involving land-use will be valid only upon the approval of the concerned government agency, as stipulated in pertinent decrees issued by respective regional states.

In sum, two major conditions; confinement to an ever shrinking resource base under the pressures of an expanding human and livestock population impose on the Karrayu the need for constant self-readjustment. The self-adaptation manifests itself in the manner of land exploitation that they see fit in view of their crisis. Besides, the question of continued survival, which is the driving force behind the process of transformation, necessitates that they maximize the returns from their land. The Karrayu have developed a particular mode of pastoralism, which proves to be remarkably adaptive in the face of multiple external challenges that they have had to cope with. Over the last half a century of time their 'version of pastoralism' has transformed itself from a range management that had predominantly been open and communal to a wider one which encompasses herding practices and different forms of crop cultivation carried out mainly in the home neighborhoods within the domain of private enclosures. Thus, the form of pastoralism now practiced in certain Karrayu neighborhoods continues to sustain itself as a way of life and, its pursuers as a group, proving to be persistent in difficult situation. This process of transformation bears out two important features of pastoralism, namely, change and continuity, a change which is an "assertion of societal continuity in changing or new circumstances" (Salzman, 1980:6).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ali Said Yesuf (1992). Resource-Use Conflicts Between Pastoralism and Irrigation Development in the Middle Awash Valley of Ethiopia. Agricultural University of Norway, M.Sc. Thesis.
- Anderson, David & Grove, Richard (eds), (1987). Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ayele Gebre Mariam (1986). Economic Adaptation and Competition for Scarce Resources: The Afar in Northeast Ethiopia. Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen, M.A. Thesis.
- Ayalew Gebre (1995). "Land Tenure Systems and Their Effects on the Afar" in Seyoum Gebre Selassie (ed), Pastoral Land Tenure Systems in the Horn of Africa, A Compendium of Eight Case Studies from Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA).

- Ayalew Gebre (2002). Pastoralism Under Pressure: Land Alienation and Pastoral Transformations among the Karrayu of Eastern Ethiopia, 1941 to the Present. Maastricht: SHAKER Publishing.
- Bahru Zewde (1984). Environment and Capital: Notes for a History of the Wonji-Shoa Sugar Estate (1951-1974). Paper Presented for the Sixth Eastern Africa History Conference Held at Ambo, Ethiopia, 14-21 March.
- Baxter, Paul (1975). "Some Consequences of Sedentarisation for Social Relationship", in T. Monod, (ed), Pastoralism in Tropical Africa, London: Oxford University Press.
- Bonfiglioli, Angelo (1992). Pastoralists at a Crossroads: Survival and Development Issues in African Pastoralism. UNICEF/UNSO Project for Nomadic Pastoralists in Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.
- Dietz, Ton (1987). Pastoralists in Dire Straits: Survival Strategies and External Interventions in a Semi-Arid Region at the Kenya/Uganda Border, Western Pokot, 1900-1986. University of Amsterdam, Ph. D. Thesis.
- Dietz, Ton (1996). Entitlements to Natural Resources: Contours of Political Environmental Geography. Utrecht: International Books.
- Doornbos, Martin (1993). "Pasture and Polis: The Roots of Political Marginalization of Somali Pastoralism", in J. Markakis (ed), Conflicts and the Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, and The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Ephrem Amare (1989). The History of Metahara Sugar Factory from its Foundation to 1974. Addis Ababa University, B.A. Thesis.
- Fratkin, Elliot (1991). Surviving Drought and Development: Ariaal Pastoralists of Northern Kenya. Oxford: Westview Press.
- Helland, Johan (1980). Five Essays on the Study of Pastoralists and the Development of Pastoralism. Bergen: African Savannah Studies, University of Bergen.
- Hogg, Richard (1987). "Development in Kenya: Drought, Desertification and Food Scarcity", in African Affairs, Vol. 86, No. 342, pp. 47-58.
- Lane, Charles (1996). Pasture Lost: Barabaig Economy, Resource Tenure, and the Alienation of their Land in Tanzania. Nairobi: Initiatives Publishers
- Ltle, Peter (1992). The Elusive Granary: Herder, Farmer, and State in Northern Kenya. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Manger, Leif et al. (1996). Survival on Meager Resources: Hadendowa Pastoralism in the Red Sea Hills. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- Markakis, John (1993). "Introduction", in J. Markakis (ed), Conflict and The Decline of Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa. Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, and The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- Mohamed Salih, M.A. (1990b). "Government Policy and Options in Pastoral Development in the Sudan", in Nomadic Peoples, 25-27, pp. 65-78.
- Muderis Abdulahi Mohammed (1998). Resource Deprivation and Socio-Economic Changes among Pastoral Households: The Case of Karayu and Itu Pastoralists in the Middle Awash Valley of Ethiopia. Agricultural University of Norway, M.Sc. Thesis.
- Regassa Bayissa (1993). Labour Migration to the Commercial Farms of the Upper Awash Valley (1950s 1990). Addis Ababa University, M.A. Thesis.
- Salzman, Philip & Galaty, John (1990). Nomads in a Changing World. Naples: Instituto Universitario Orientale.

- Tekele Tilahun, Bashir Hadj & Bashir Barre (1994). "From Communal Grazing to Privatized Enclosures: A Case Study of Changing Land Tenure in Region 5", in Dessalegn Rahmato (ed), Land Tenure and Land Policy in Ethiopia After the Derg. Proceedings of the Second Workshop of the Land Tenure Project, University of Trondheim, Norway
- Tibebe Alemayehu (1997). Park versus Pastoralists: Conflict in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia. Agricultural University of Norway, M.Sc. Thesis.

Why did the Manjo convert to Protestant? Social Discrimination and Coexistence in Kafa, Southwest Ethiopia

Sayuri Yoshida¹

This article examines the implications of Conversion of the Manjo to Protestant. The Manjo are socially discriminated against in everyday life by the Kafa. But after their conversion to Protestant, social relationship between the Manjo and the Kafa has become changing. This article concludes that conversion to Protestant is a strategic method exerted by the Manjo aiming at a coexistence with the Kafa in the Kafa society.

1. Introduction

This article is about the Manjo living in the Kafa zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS)². The Manjo reside in all ten *wärädas* which make up the Kafa zone. The population of the Manjo living there is estimated to be about 10,000 to 12,000 people³. The majority living in Kafa is the Kafa, whose language, *Kafi-noono* (Kafa language) is also used by the Manjo.

The history and the society of the Kafa have been studied intensively. Bieber (1920) conducted extensive research on their culture at the beginning of the 20th century. Huntingford (1955) laid out a comprehensive structure of the society that formed the framework of the traditional Kafa Kingdom. Orent (1969, 1970a, b) conducted research on the kinship system and religion of the Kafa society in the 1960s. And Lange (1982) wrote a detailed history of the Kafa based on field research and written material.

Based on research done before the Derg regime, these studies generally presume the existence of a social hierarchy similar to the caste system. At the top of this hierarchy were the Kafa, followed by occupational groups including blacksmiths (*Qemmo*), weavers (*Shammano*), bards (*Shatto*), potters⁴, and tanners (*Manno*). In this hierarchy, the Manjo were commonly referred to as hunters, given the lowest status equal only to slaves⁵.

However, after the remnants of the hierarchical structure sustaining the Kafa Kingdom were totally wiped out under the Derg regime, anthropologists have sought new perspectives to understand how the Kafa and the Manjo are coping with the rapid socio-economical and religious change. Recently, Gezahegn (2003) published a groundbreaking article on the current situation of the Manjo, based on fieldwork

¹ Nagoya University. Furo-cho, Chikusa-ku, Nagoya, Aichi 464-8601, Japan.

² The Manjo also live in Sheka zone, Bench Maji zone, Dawro zone, Konta special *wäräda* of SNNPRS, as well as in some parts of Oromiya and Gambella.

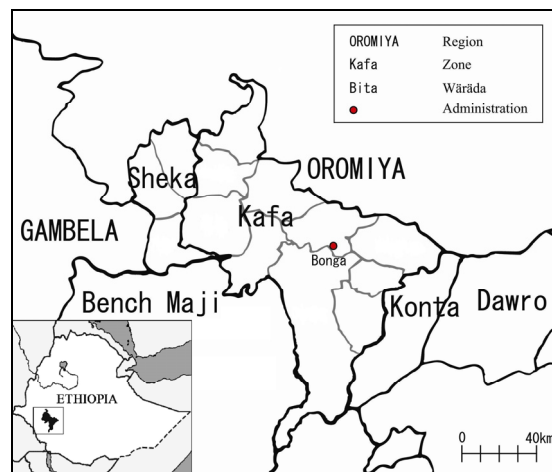
³ This estimation was given to me by the Head Administrator of the Kafa zone. By percentage this amounts to 1.1~1.4% of the whole population of Kafa zone (estimated 858,600 in 2007). This seems to be more appropriate than an estimate mentioned by Freeman and Pankhurst (2003: 76). Quoting data from van Halteren (1996: 4), they estimated that the Manjo account for 5 to 10 per cent of the entire population in Kafa zone and Sheka zone.

⁴ Pottery is customarily made by women of the Manno and the Manjo.

⁵ According to Lange, the Manjo should be distinguished from slaves (Lange 1982: 267). The Manjo have their own clans that is different from that of the Kafa. One of my Manjo informants told me, 'The Manjo and the Kafa are not the same. The first king of the Kafa Kingdom was a Manjo, the Kafa are newcomers and they usurped the throne.' Lange also refers to a similar story (Lange 1982: 181).

conducted among the Manjo living near Bonga. Gezahegn's main focus was social and economical changes undergone by the Manjo since the Derg regime. Whereas previous researchers have treated the Manjo as hunters, Gezahegn demonstrated that the Manjo is changing its way of life from hunting and gathering to farming. However, Gezahegn's perspective is limited by the fact that his research was conducted in only two villages. Gezahegn (2003: 91) mentioned that the Manjo receive little income from agriculture and described them as 'poor farmer'. However, this image is far from the reality of the Manjo living in Bita *wäräda* and Gesha *wäräda* where I did my research⁶. The people in these areas earn their income mostly from agriculture, cultivating various crops and plowing more land than Kafa farmers. The Manjo living in Bita *wäräda* are not only well-known for their economic success in coffee cultivation, but also for their fearlessness after the 2002 incident⁷.

This article aims to give a contrasting image of the Manjo, not as victims of inhumane discrimination but as agents living on their own accord selecting their own religious identity. In doing so, I examine the implications of the conversion of the Manjo to Protestant⁸. Conversion to Christianity should have eliminated the social discrimination. However, the initial attempt to convert the Manjo to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity under the Derg regime failed to bring about the assimilation of the Manjo to the Kafa society. Under the current policies of decentralization and 'self-determination' the Manjo people began converting to Protestant. By doing this, they were able to retain their identity as the Manjo.



Map 1. Kafa Zone and location of *wärädas* mentioned in the article.

⁶ This article is based on information and data collected in my research which was funded by the Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research (Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). The research was conducted under the project entitled "Historiographical Investigation of Ethnic Conflict in Northeast Africa" (Project Leader, Prof. Katsuyoshi Fukui, Kyoto University). IES granted me support for my research. Fieldwork in Kafa zone was conducted in three phases for a total of one year. The first phase was conducted for three months from January to March 2005 in Bita *wäräda*. The second phase of the research was conducted from August 2005 to February 2006 in Bita *wäräda*, Gesha *wäräda*, Addia *wäräda*, and Decha *wäräda*. The 3rd phase was conducted from August 2006 to October in Gesha *wäräda*.

⁷ The Manjo who live in Bita *wäräda* and Yeki *wäräda* in Sheka zone, mounted an attack on the Kafa in March 2002. The details of the attack is reported in Vaughan (2003) and in Yoshida (2007).

⁸ In Ethiopia, while many people can and do distinguish between varieties of Protestantism, particularly the mainstream Lutheran type and Pentecostalism, many others call all Protestant Christians simply *pent'e* in distinction from Ethiopian Orthodox and Catholic Christians. In this article, I call the 'pent'e' Protestants.

2. Stereotyped images of the Manjo

In Ethiopia, any person who speaks *Kafi-noono* is called Kafa. But inside the Kafa society, people identify themselves as being either Gomoro⁹, Manno¹⁰, and Manjo. The *Kafi-noono* speakers not belonging to occupational groups are called Gomoro (hereafter referred to as Kafa) in the Kafa society and this is the way they call themselves, too. The Kafa distinguish themselves from the Manjo, not including the latter in their own category of *asho* ('people'), and sometimes regard the Manjo as sub-human¹¹.

The Kafa explain this 'sub-humanness' of the Manjo by pointing out certain features and characteristics which the Manjo people are supposed to have. For example:

1. Eating habits: The Manjo eat 'unclean' and 'filthy' food. This includes the meat of religiously prohibited animals such as savanna monkey, baboon, colobus, wild boar, dead animals and also 'dirty' food¹².
2. Physical appearance: The Manjo are short in height and their hair strongly curled. Their noses are low and wide. The Manjo do not care about their hygiene. The Manjo do not wash their bodies and clothes, and so, give off an unpleasant smell, in some cases caused by a skin disease.
3. Characteristics: The Manjo are wicked and are liars. The Manjo are not interested in education, and are ignorant and lazy. The Manjo are extravagant and thief-like. And the Manjo do not have a sense of morality.

Interestingly, this stereotyped image of the Manjo is shared not only among the Kafa but also by the Amhara people¹³. A Manjo explained this, 'the Amhara people accustomed to habits of the Kafa'. Moreover, similar idioms and logic referring to eating habits, physical appearance and characteristics are used among Ethiopians in general in describing certain groups held in contempt.

On the part of the Manjo, they are well aware of these stereotyped images by the Kafa. One of my Manjo informants told me that some Kafa people say, 'The Manjo have nails divided into two. Men have tails at the back of their heads, and women have tails on their foreheads'. The Manjo regard the Kafa as liars, ready to deceive the Manjo. And the Manjo also consider the Kafa as cowards and extremely suspicious, whereas the Manjo are brave and honest.

The Manjo and the Kafa abuse each other, using all sorts of foul language. However, when I stayed in the house of both the Kafa and the Manjo, it was difficult to point out differences in life style of the Kafa and the Manjo. Today, the Manjo gave up hunting and cultivate the fields as well as the Kafa, and the Manjo stopped their habits, such as

⁹ Although the origin of the denomination, Gomoro, is not clear, it is generally understood that it derives from the fact that the Kafa used to hunt, and eat hippopotamus (*gumare* in Amharic) in the Gojeb river (Orent 1969: 47).

¹⁰ The Manno are tanners and also discriminated against by the Kafa, similarly as the Manjo in everyday life. The Kafa and the Manjo claim the Manno eat the meat remaining on the hide, when the Manno process the hide into leather. This is the main reason why the former discriminates against the latter. However, some of the clans belonging to the Kafa can be found among the Manno, the two clans originally considered to be one clan, coming from the same region.

¹¹ The Kafa consider the Manjo as '*gondo ashi yero*' ('people of the bad clans'). Mengistu also pointed out that the Manjo live in Sheka zone is not considered as human (Mengistu 2003: 101).

¹² One of my Manjo informants told me that the Manjo eat colobus, but never eat baboon and savanna monkey.

¹³ The immigration of the Amhara from northern Ethiopia to the Kafa zone occurred in three major phases. Initial groups followed Menelik's conquest of the area in 1897. The second influx took place during the Italian occupation; the third resulted from the resettlement policy of the Derg regime (Vaughan 2006: 194).

eating wild animals, considered one of the reasons of discrimination. The Manjo are increasingly gaining means of accumulating wealth and are becoming able to buy clothes and shoes sold in boutiques making them indistinguishable in terms of appearance. However, even after the Manjo approached the economic level of the Kafa, the Manjo are still subjected to social discrimination in the Kafa society.

3. Discrimination and Social Relationship

The Manjo are socially discriminated against in everyday life by the Kafa. Social discrimination is especially noticeable on occasions in the social life of the Manjo and the Kafa, such as at greetings, at mealtime, in communal labor, in the choice of spouses, the location of burial grounds, etc. Similar situations of social discrimination have been reported by the Fuga, the Wayto and the Waata, as well as various occupational groups scattered all over Ethiopia (e.g. Pankhurst 1999, Gamst 1979).

Before the Derg period, the Kafa discrimination against the Manjo was far more brazen. According to both Manjo and Kafa informants who lived at that time, when a Manjo happened to come across a Kafa, it was not uncommon for the Manjo to be beaten by the Kafa. When a Manjo happened to wear the same clothes and shoes that a Kafa wore, the Manjo was, more often than not, beaten and forced to take them off. Moreover, when a Manjo encountered a Kafa on a road side, the Manjo was expected to humiliate himself, stepping aside, bowing and greeting the Kafa with the phrase '*showocchi qebona*' literally meaning, 'let me die for you'.

Even today, some Kafa refuse to allow a Manjo to enter their house. In many cases, the Manjo are requested to sit on an *ensete* leaf or a beehive box placed outside. Even if, by chance, a Manjo is permitted to enter the house of a Kafa, his or her seat will be near the entrance. Of course, the Kafa never enter the Manjo's house. Rather, if they are neighbors, the Kafa only looked inside the Manjo's house from the doorway.

Complaining to me about this kind of behavior, one of my informants said 'Why can't a Manjo enter the house of a Kafa, when a dog is allowed to do so?' It is not only in the house of an individual that the Kafa forbids the Manjo to enter. It is quite common for a Manjo to be prohibited to enter to local restaurants. However, outright refusal of admitting entrance of a Manjo is avoided. The owner of the restaurant (mostly Kafa) merely tells the Manjo that the food is sold out, which suggests that he/she is an uninvited guest. In few cases, where the Manjo are permitted to enter and have a drink, owners have bottles and glasses only used by the Manjo.

The Kafa people try not to have meals together with the Manjo or to use the same tableware. This is because cooking utensils used by the Manjo are considered 'unclean'. The contrasting attitude of the Kafa towards honey and *t'äjj* (mead) may be a good example showing how the Kafa regard the cooking utensils 'unclean'. The Kafa people eat honey that the Manjo gathered for the Kafa, whereas drinking *t'äjj* made by the Manjo was abhorred.

Recently, there are some Manjo who attempt to resist this type of discrimination. These Manjo, mostly young and educated men¹⁴, try and sometimes succeed in persuading the Kafa to treat the Manjo in a human way. But such amicable relationships are usually limited to individual relationships and never extend to the Manjo as a whole. Because many Manjo tend to hold back and also the Manjo are a minority, such individual attempts against discrimination are intentionally neglected by the Kafa.

¹⁴ Before the Derg period, the Manjo was turned out of school, and, most of the Manjo were deprived of the opportunity of education.

I have attempted to understand the discrimination imposed on the Manjo by the Kafa based on their own ways of explanation. However, the Manjo social position and way of life have changed drastically today. Change in the Manjo subsistence economy and their conversion to Christianity have had significant influences on their economic and social status of the Manjo vis-a-vis the Kafa.



Plate 1. A campaign poster made by an NGO criticizing discrimination against the Manjo. (At the center of this poster is a Manjo family without umbrellas in the rain, the Kafa restaurant owner denying them permission to enter.)

4. The Changing Life style

Before the Derg era, the Manjo had no right to own land and moved around to hunt and gather food (Gezahegn 2003: 90). According to one of my informants, who remembered those days said ‘Until the 1980s, the population was lower than today and there still was a lot of forest left. There was plenty of prey for hunting and I used to eat meat almost every day!’

One of my Manjo informants told me that, in those days, they used to start working on their lands at daybreak and when the sun is at its height, they set out for hunting walking tens of kilometers every day, and came home with wild animals at sunset. Today, the Manjo recall those days with nostalgia and pride. Elder Manjo who are known for their hunting and fishing skills are reverentially called *aaddoo* (hunter).

Animals which the Manjo hunted were wild boar, antelope, porcupine, colobus, buffalo, leopard, elephant and so on. These animals were targeted mainly for food. But there were other animals captured for other reasons. For example, civet cats were captured alive by traps to be sold to Kafa Muslims (Huntingford 1955: 106; Ishihara 2003). Porcupines and other animals were, and are still considered as panacea: For example, the meat of porcupines is considered medicine for cold, some kinds of skin disease, etc. And the Manjo captured porcupines by request from Kafa individuals. The hide and fur of certain animals were used as materials for clothes and hats, especially that of leopards and lions. Elephant tusks used to provide significant income.

Today, the living environment of the Manjo has changed greatly, and hunting is rare. One of the reasons given by the Manjo themselves is that restrictions on hunting have

become severe (Gezahegn 2003: 90). However, despite this claim, the Manjo continued hunting using dogs, guns, trapping nets, etc. Hunting seems to have declined only where wild and big animals have decreased¹⁵. Therefore it has increasingly become difficult to hunt big animals unless the Manjo travel a long distance. Nowadays, the Manjo buy meat at the market. But there are Manjo men who sometimes go fishing in the river.

The Manjo women used to make earthenware at home while the Manjo men went out for hunting. Women made plates, pans, pots and water-jugs, and sold them at local markets. Nowadays many Manjo women have stopped producing earthenware for cash income, making them only for their own use at home. There are some young Manjo women who do not even know how to make earthenware. One of the reasons for this is because kitchen utensils made from aluminum and plastic are coming into wide use and the demand for earthenware is decreasing. Another reason is that the Manjo believe their practice of making earthenware is one of the reasons the Kafa discriminated against them.

Apiculture is one of the sources of cash income of the Manjo. Apiculture is most active in Gesha *wäräda* and Saylem *wäräda*, northwest part of Kafa. Because generally the Kafa are not as familiar with the skill and knowledge of apiculture as the Manjo, the Kafa buy honey from the Manjo. Though the Kafa make *t'äjj* and *bärz* from the honey purchased from the Manjo, the Kafa never sell these drinks to the Manjo. The Manjo raised objection to this situation and claim the right to buy and drink *t'äjj* and *bärz*. And, this situation is changing, as aspects of discrimination is undergoing change.

Today, most Manjo engage in farming. The life style of the Manjo is not different from that of the Kafa farmers cultivating staple food, including maize, sorghum, wheat, barley, *t'ef*, *ensete*, beans, etc. In addition to these crops, daily used vegetables, such as onion, garlic, ginger, cabbage, sweet potato, sugar cane or fruits such as banana, mango, and papaya are planted in the backyard garden. Some Manjo grow coffee and get cash incomes more than the Kafa. The Manjo have cows, bulls, goats, sheep, fowls, horses, etc. as well as the Kafa, and eat meat and dairy products. Therefore, in this respect, the Manjo are far from being 'hunters', or 'poor farmers.'

When I asked some of my Manjo informants why they gave up hunting and became farmers, they told me that 'It is because we converted to Protestant'.

5. Religion in Kafa

Christianity in Kafa is reported that Orthodox Christianity was introduced in the Kafa area in a relatively early period in the 17th century (Lange 1982: 299). But my informants told me, Orthodox Christianity was brought into Kafa in two phases. The first phase is in the early 16th century, when seven churches were built in Kafa¹⁶. But at this initial phase, Orthodox Christianity was accepted only by a limited number of Kafa individuals. The second phase is after conquest by the Ethiopian Empire under Menelik's reign. When Ras Wolde Giorgis came to Kafa, he built many churches in Kafa and many Kafa converted to Orthodox Christianity. Nowadays, the Kafa majority are Orthodox Christians and the rest are either Muslim or pagan. The Manjo people

¹⁵ Official restrictions against hunting were not enough to force people, who traditionally resorted to hunting, to give up the practice. Similar situations are reported from cases of the Majangir and the Banna (Sato 2005; Masuda 2005).

¹⁶ These churches are Baha Giorgis, Shapa Gabriel, Gidi Giorgis, Kuti Michael, Chiri Michael, Sharadda Mariam, and Washa or Mera Michael.

largely remained pagan until the Derg period and were under the strong influence of the *alamo*, or diviner.

However, the influence of the *alamo* is not limited to the Manjo and the Christian Kafa also depend on them¹⁷. There were not only Kafa *alamos* but also Manjo *alamos* in Kafa and both *alamos* were respected from the local populace. But, access to the Kafa *alamo* was strictly limited to the Kafa and the Manjo were never allowed to enter the house of the Kafa *alamo*. On the other hand, the Kafa never entered the house of the Manjo *alamo* even if he/she was allowed to do so.

During the Derg period, many prominent *alamos* were executed and their residences burnt down. In this process, in 1974 and 1975, the government forced the Manjo people to convert to Orthodox Christianity. The Derg officers said to the Manjo, 'if you convert to Orthodox Christianity, the Kafa will treat the Manjo as an equal.'

However, not all of the Manjo were converted to Orthodox Christianity. The Manjo living in the northwest part of Kafa, for example Gesha *wäräda*, mainly joined the Orthodox Church, while the Manjo living in the western part of Kafa, for example Bitä *wäräda*, remained pagan following the instruction of the *alamo*, until they joined the Protestant churches after the collapse of the Derg. And also, some Manjo living near Bonga professed Catholicism before the Derg period¹⁸.

Although a large number of the Manjo were converted to Orthodox Christianity in 1974 in Gesha *wäräda*, they were already being driven out from the churches by 1975. The Christian Kafa people were opposed to the conversion of the Manjo and the Kafa refused to sit on places where the Manjo sat and, moreover, refused to sit side-by-side with the Manjo in churches. The Kafa complained that the Manjo were converted to Christianity only because they wanted to marry Kafa women and some Manjo were even attacked by the Kafa on their way back home from churches.

However, for the Manjo, conversion was not necessarily the most favorable choice. The Orthodox Church imposed too many restrictions regarding food habits (e.g. prohibiting the eating of wild animals and the custom of fasting), which were uncompromisable to their way of living, and there were many Manjo that became Christian only because they were ordered to do so. The Kafa also resented the official policies of allowing the Manjo to convert to Christianity. The priests, mainly Kafa, were not ready for such liberalization, and churches were located in residential areas of the Kafa. Those Manjo who only reluctantly became Christians used to escape the ceremonial services, spending the time in the forest, only coming back when services ended.

The attempt to convert the Manjo to Orthodox Christianity was an externally initiated attempt to incorporate them into the Kafa society. This attempt failed because both the Manjo and the Kafa did not ready to mingle with each other. For the Manjo, conversion to Orthodox Christianity meant 'melting' into the Kafa society, which, they knew would not be accepted by the Kafa themselves.

6. Conversion to Protestant

The first Protestant missionary, Qalä Həywät Church, came to Kafa in 1950/1951, and they began missionary activities. At the beginning, priests and their family stayed in Bonga. The missionary staff included nurses who offered medical services around

¹⁷ Some *alamos* are Ethiopian Orthodox Christians.

¹⁸ Catholic missions had stations near Bonga, for example, Gimbo *wäräda* and Decha *wäräda* in mid-nineteenth century (Orent 1969: 175; Lange 1982: 306-308; Abba Antonios, 1998: 70).

Bonga. In 1961/1962, when yellow fever epidemic broke out in Kafa zone, they offered medical treatment to patients living in remote areas by using helicopter and plane. After 1967/1968, they began using planes for their church activities. Under such situation, believers gradually increased in Bonga and in 1971/1972, the church succeeded in converting some Manjo to Protestant. But under the Derg regime, foreign missionaries were deported and their activities halted. After the collapse of the regime, Qalä Həywät Church resumed their missionary activities again and also another Protestant Churches entered Kafa¹⁹. Today, there are many Protestant Churches in one *k'ebele* in central, western and northwestern part of Kafa zone. In the eastern and the southern part of Kafa, Protestant Churches began their proselytizing activities only after 2000.

The Protestant Churches treated the Manjo and the Kafa equally. The preachers of the churches accused the social discrimination between the Kafa and the Manjo. This approach against discrimination attracted many Manjo people who started to join the Protestant Churches.

One of my Manjo informants told me that those who wanted to join the Orthodox Church were asked to pay 500 *birr* to the priest, for merely being a Manjo. That was why this man chose to convert to Protestant. Conversion to Orthodox Christianity did not effect a suppression of discrimination against the Manjo.

Most frequently raised reasons that led the Manjo to turn to Christianity were sickness. Before conversion, a Manjo who had a sick child consulted a local *alamo* for remedies. When the *alamo* failed to provide a solution to his client's problem, a Manjo convert came along and advised him to join one of the conferences of the Protestant churches. Moved by the enthusiastic atmosphere of the conference, he was converted to Christianity. As soon as the person converted to Protestant, child regained his health. These episodes were gradually transmitted orally contributing to the spread of Protestant among the Manjo. Priests criticized the *alamo* degrading them as sorcerers preaching the ways of the *satan*²⁰.

Quoting the words from the Bible, the priests taught the Manjo converts to stop eating the savanna monkey, the baboon, colobus, etc. The Manjo supposedly followed these instructions and stopped hunting as well as eating wild animals.

Even outside the churches, the Kafa followers of the Protestant Churches abandoned and criticized their previous ways of discriminating against the Manjo. This equal treatment by the Kafa towards the Manjo promoted the spread of Protestant among the Manjo.

After conversion to Protestant, many things have changed in the daily life of the Manjo. Firstly, for example, Gesha *wäräda* and Bitä *wäräda*, the way of greeting has changed. Today, the Manjo converts greet each other '*Yeri gacchabe* (God bless you)'²¹. Secondly, the formalities of ceremonies have changed and ceremonial songs chanted in social gatherings such as, weddings, funerals, and communal work are substituted by hymns. Thirdly, they quit visiting the *alamo* to consult about their problems. Fourthly the Manjo gave up eating wild animals such as colobus and wild boar, and instead began eating mutton and cabbage which were previously tabooed food under the *alamo*.

¹⁹ Protestant Churches that came to Kafa zone after 1991 are; Ethiopian Evangelical Christianity Mekane Yesus, Mulu Wongel Church, Mäsärätä Krəstos Church, Misgana Church, Həywät Berhan Church, Genet Church, Hawaryat Church and so on.

²⁰ There are *alamos* who converted to Protestant. Some of them told me the reason to convert, '*Ego*, my spirit, commanded me to convert', or 'I was ill at that time.'

²¹ Interestingly, even some of *alamo* who have not converted yet greet each other in this way in Gesha *wäräda*.

Fifthly, those Kafa and Manjo who converted to Protestant began to visit each other's houses and share their meals. In addition, I was told that some Manjo recently chose Kafa Protestants to become God-parents for their children.

7. Conclusion

Because conversion to Protestant caused drastic changes in the life style of the Manjo, even changes not directly related to the conversion have been associated with it in a cause-and-effect relationship. The Manjo tend to explain these changes, especially the decline of hunting by referring to their conversion to Protestant. However, hunting had already been on the decline before Protestant churches even entered the area. As mentioned above the Manjo were gradually shifting to agriculture after the Land Reform in 1975, and gave up hunting under official pressures against it under the Derg regime.

Thus, I propose here that the logic the Manjo use here is a strategic way of seeking coexistence with the Kafa. The reason why they resort to such logic is closely related to their religious situation in the Kafa zone. Now, most of the Kafa are Orthodox Christians. Some of the Manjo were converted to Orthodox Christianity under the Derg regime, but joining the Orthodox Church meant being assimilated to the Kafa society, and this was inconceivable for both the Kafa and the Manjo.

However, the proselytizing activities launched by the Protestant Churches in this area were not only a new phenomenon for the Kafa but also for the Manjo. Even today, the Orthodox Christians and Muslims of Kafa regard Protestant as a 'newcomers' religion. Becoming Protestants meant possessing a new identity, alien to the residents of Kafa.

Since 1991, conversion of the Manjo to Protestant proceeded rapidly. In Ethiopia, Protestant Churches characteristically focused their missionary activities in societies where missionary church activities were scant. In southern Ethiopia, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is connected with the image of the Amhara and not accepted by the local people (Masuda 2001: 183). Alexander, who conducted research on the conversion of the Ari people to Protestant, noted that among the converts there are a bulk of people belonging to occupational groups, for example, potter, tanner and blacksmith. Protestant Churches succeeded in attracting believers by promoting equality and by extending community services. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity did not solve the problem of ethnic and cultural inequality and hierarchy, and conversion to Orthodox Christianity meant assimilation to 'Ethiopian' (Alexander 2005: 145-150).

Qalä Həywät Church, which was first Protestant missionary in Kafa zone, conducted missionary activities since the 1950s and began their activities by extended medical, educational, and other welfare services to the local people. A similar way of initiating missionary activity is reported by many anthropologists conducting research in southern Ethiopia (e.g. Donham 1999, Sato 2002). In Kafa zone, Protestant Churches provided social welfare services and the opportunity for both the Kafa and the Manjo to approach one another. It was an attempt for coexistence in a religious society. In other words, conversion to Protestant was a strategic method exerted by the Manjo aiming at a coexistence with the Kafa.

But this is only one side of the coin. In order to understand the conversion of the Manjo to Protestant, we need to take the aims of the Protestant Churches in consideration. One of Kafa informants told me, 'I don't know why, but Protestant Churches and NGOs are fond of the Manjo.' Some Protestant Churches even attempt to survey the living situation of the Manjo. This indicates that the Manjo are becoming the

target of proselytization by the Protestant Churches. Conversion of the Manjo is not only selected by the Manjo for their own interests, but also effected by the situation of the Kafa society, where Orthodox Christianity was deeply rooted, and the proselytizing strategy of Protestant Churches.

References

- Abba Antonios Alberto. 1998. *The Apostolic Vicariate of Galla, a Capuchin Mission in Ethiopia (1846-1942): Antecedents, Evolution and Problematics*, Addis Ababa; Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology.
- Alexander Naty. 2005. 'Protestant Christianity among the Aari people of southwest Ethiopia'. In: Böll, V., Kaplan, S., Martínez d'Alòs-Moner, A. and Sokolinskaia, F. (eds.). *Ethiopia and the Missions: Historical and Anthropological Insights*, Münster: Lit Verlag, pp.141-152.
- Bieber, F.J. 1920. *Kaffa: Ein altkusschitisches Volkstum in Inner-Afrika*, Vol.1. Münster.
- Donham, Donald L. 1999. *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution*, Berkeley; University of California Press.
- Freeman, Dana. & Pankhurst, Alula. (eds.). 2003. 'The North-West'. In: Freeman, D. & Pankhurst, A. (eds.). *Peripheral People: The Excluded Minorities of Ethiopia*, Asmara: The Red Sea Press, pp.70-79.
- Gamst, Frederick C. 1979 'Wayto ways: change from hunting to peasant life'. In: Hess, R. (ed). *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, Chicago; University of Illinois, pp.233-238.
- Gezahegn Petros. 2003. 'Kafa'. In: Freeman, D. & Pankhurst, A. (eds.). *Peripheral People: The Excluded Minorities of Ethiopia*, Asmara: The Red Sea Press, pp.80-96.
- Huntingford, G.W.B. 1955. *The Galla of Ethiopia the Kingdom of Kafa and Janjero*, London: International African Institute.
- Ishihara, Minako. 2003. 'The Culture Logic of civiculture in Ethiopia'. *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*, 8-9, pp.35-60.
- Lange, Werner J. 1982. *History of the Southern Gonga (Southern Ethiopia)*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Masuda, Ken. 2001. 'A Politico-Cultural Approach to Modern Education in Southern Ethiopia'. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 62, pp.165-200 (in Japanese).
- . 2005. 'The feature of "repository of wilderness"'. In: Katsuyoshi Fukui (ed). *Socialised Eco-Resources*, Kyoto: Kyoto University Press (in Japanese).
- Mengistu Seyoum. 2003. 'Shekacho'. In: Freeman, D. & Pankhurst, A. (eds.). *Peripheral People: The Excluded Minorities of Ethiopia*, Asmara: The Red Sea Press, pp.97-104.
- Orent, Amnon. 1969. *Lineage Structure and the Supernatural: the Kafa of Southern Ethiopia*, Ph.D.Thesis. Boston University.
- . 1970a. 'Dual organizations in Southern Ethiopia: anthropological imagination or ethnographical fact?'. *Ethnology* 9 (3), pp.228-233.
- . 1970b. 'Refocusing on the history of Kafa prior to 1897: a discussion of political process'. *African Historical Studies* 3(2), pp.263-293.
- Pankhurst, Alula. 1999. "'Caste" in Africa: the evidence from south-western Ethiopia reconsidered'. *Africa* 69(4), pp.485-509.

- Sato, Ren'ya. 2002. 'Evangelical Christianity & Ethnic Consciousness in Majangir'. In: James, W., Donham, D., Kurimoto, E. & Triulzi, A. (eds.). *Remapping Ethiopia: Socialism & After*, Oxford: James Currey, pp.185-197.
- . 2005. 'Strategies to Surviving in the Forest'. In: Katsuyoshi Fukui (ed). *Socialised Eco-Resources*, Kyoto: Kyoto University Press (in Japanese).
- Van Halteren, Bart. 1996. *The Socio-Cultural and Socioeconomic Position of the Manjo of Kaffecho-Shekacho Zone* (Identification report), Bonga.
- Vaughan, Sarah. 2003. *Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia*, Ph.D.Thesis, The University of Edinburgh.
- . 2006. 'Responses to Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia's Southern Region'. In: Turton, D. (ed.). *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford: James Currey, pp.181-207.
- Yoshida, Sayuri. 2007. *Constructing subjectivity of the Manjo in the modern state of Ethiopia: from the discriminated peoples' point of view*, M.A.Thesis, Nanzan University (in Japanese).

Violence Extended into the Middle Omo Valley: A View of Recent Raiding Conflicts in Malo, Southwest Ethiopia

Takeshi Fujimoto¹

In 1976, armed attackers hit Malo farmers' settlements in the middle Omo valley, killing over 1000 inhabitants, devastating dwellings and looting cattle. Subsequently, similar attacks have sporadically occurred when state control weakened. Farmers claim that main perpetrators are *golde*, Surmic-speaking agro-pastoralists in the lower Omo valley, who had little link with them before. This paper discusses causes, changing contexts, and consequences of the attacks.

Introduction

Southwest Ethiopia, large part of which is now administered as the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR), is a distinctive area embracing the greatest ethnic diversity in the country. Ethnic conflict has been one of the main themes of anthropological work in this region, particularly in the lower Omo valley, the extreme southwest area approximately corresponding to the current South Omo Zone of the SNNPR. Remote from state control, this lowland area has been home to reciprocal conflicts fought among the agro-pastoralists ever since as well as long before the inclusion into Ethiopian territory at the end of the 19th century. While they have been generally balanced in power due to reciprocal counter-attacks, a gradual territorial shift of overall northward movement has taken place involving changes in arms, tactics, targets, purposes, etc. (e.g., Tornay 1979, 1993; Turton 1994). Several agro-pastoral groups who themselves have been pushed by southern neighbours have frequently raided and gradually encroached upon the neighbouring farmers (Fukui 1979, 1994, 2002, 2005; Todd 1979; Abbink 1993, 1994, 2000a, 2000b).

Next to the lower Omo valley in the northeast but clearly marked by its mountainous topography and higher elevation is the middle Omo valley.² The area is densely populated by sedentary farmers who subsist mainly on the cultivation of root and tuber crops such as enset (*Ensete ventricosum*). While numerous kingdoms and chiefdoms flourished and fought for their power with their traditional arms of spears and shields prior to the Ethiopian rule, subsequent local or ethnic conflicts had apparently ceased to exist since the introduction of state control. While state colonizers such as soldiers and administrative officers carried guns to defence themselves and to suppress local peoples' riots, local peoples were strictly kept away from modern arms.

Following the demise of the imperial regime in 1974, most colonizers fled away. Immediately after that, however, parts of the area suffered unprecedented violent attacks, a fact generally overlooked in academic writing. Not only have livestock and

¹ University of Human Environments, Okazaki, Aichi 444-3505, Japan. E-mail: fujimoto@uhe.ac.jp

² Here I use the term *middle Omo valley* to refer to the geographical coverage of former North Omo Zone, which in 2000 split into five distinct units: three zones (Dawro, Gamo Gofa, and Wolayta) and two special districts (Basketo and Konta; Vaughan 2006: 193).

other property been stolen, but numerous inhabitants, often women and children, have been mercilessly killed. Subsequently, peripheral settlements along the Omo River at both sides have sporadically met acute raids. Survivors insist that sudden attackers who always come stealthily and armed with guns cannot be local peoples but those agro-pastoralists in the lower Omo valley. Due to the repeated attacks, a number of settlements near the Omo River have been permanently abandoned. Here I give a preliminary report of the cases of violent conflicts encountered and related by the Malo, among whom I have conducted anthropological fieldwork.

The Malo in Regional and Historical Settings

Originating from the country's central highlands, the Omo River penetrates Southwest Ethiopia, finally flowing into Lake Turkana on the Kenyan border. The valley is occupied by a variety of people involving over 20 ethnic groups who speak different languages belonging to the Semitic, Cushitic, and Omotic families in the Afro-Asiatic phylum, as well as to the Surmic and Nilotic families in the Nilo-Saharan phylum.

But the riverbank is uninhabited except by those who live on riverbank cultivation and fishing such as the Kara and the Koegu (Matsuda 1997). Donham (1986: 20) pointed out that, in Ethiopia, rivers (and escarpments) form geographical barriers to social intercourse, rather than provide avenues of communication and trade. This holds true with the Omo. The riverbank is the least exploited and the most marginal.

With a population of 40,000, the Malo, one of the Omotic-speaking farmer peoples, occupy a small area at the southern side of the middle Omo valley.³ In a mountainous land from ca 600 to 3400 metres above sea level, they practice mixed farming by growing diverse crops, including cereals (e.g., tef, barley, and sorghum) and root crops (e.g., enset, taro, and yams) and by raising livestock (Fujimoto 2002).

They border the following groups: the Gofa in the east, the Baskeeto in the south, the Dime and Doola in the west, the Ch'ara in the northwest, the Konta and the Koysa in the north, and the Dawro in the northeast, all of them farmer groups speaking Omotic languages. Until the integration into the Ethiopian state at the end of the 19th century, these groups formed similar kingdoms reigned by kings (*kaate*) for several centuries. Oral histories suggest that migration between these polities was common (Fujimoto 2006). Thus, the Malo live next door to those groups who share linguistic and cultural traditions.

While the Malo were known as belligerent soldiers in the kingdom time, they were forced to settle down and to expand cereal farming to feed colonizers in the imperial time. At that time, the colonizers carried guns to threaten the Malo who were strictly forbidden to obtain them.

After the demise of imperial regime, most of the colonizers fled away from Malo land, some to nearby Gofa towns such as Bulqi and Sawla (Felege Neway), some to Addis Ababa and other cities, some to their original country, but also others to the lower Omo valley in the southwest. The Malo were then virtually freed from the exploitative rule. At this moment, however, they were encountered by large-scale armed attacks. They suffered unprecedented casualties and vast settlement devastation that they now recall as *ola* (war).

³ Their land is currently included in Malo Koza *Woreda* (District), Gamo Gofa Zone, SNNPR.

I report on the attacks that have occurred in Malo based on the interviews with survivors and then consider them in a wider context. First, I describe the latest conflict, which I nearly encountered in the field.

Armed Violence in 1999

The latest attack, in my knowledge, broke out in Falaha Koysh administrative village (*k'abale*), northern Malo, on 22 April 1999. I had been there the previous month, interviewing about the past attacks. Hearing about the latest attack, I came back one month later. The following description is based on the interviews that took place then.

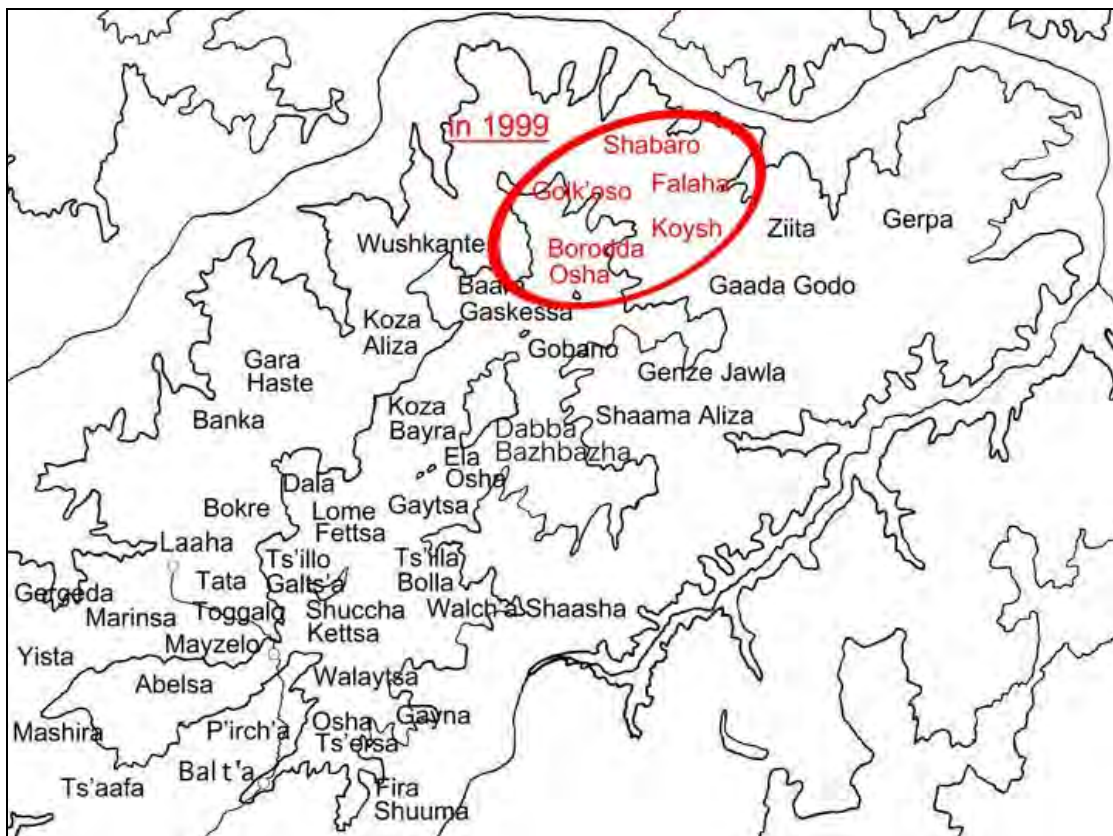


Fig. 1 Location of Malo Settlements Met by Armed Raiding in 1999

At dawn, piercing gunshots awoke the inhabitants of Mella and Shabaro (elevation circa 1300 metres), both marginal settlements of Falaha Koysh *k'abale* located at the distance of three hours' walk from the Omo River. From below (i.e., through the path reaching the Omo River), raiders appeared first in Mella (located to the north) and then in Shabaro (to the south). Almost all of the first raiders carried automatic weapons. Without entering individual homes, they advanced straight into the adjacent Falaha settlements over the small ridge. Most of the inhabitants of Mella and Shabaro panicked and barely escaped; they took nothing with them and hid themselves in remote thickets.

The first raiders hurried into the main Falaha settlements (roughly 1400 metres) within an hour. Some of them remained there, but others went south. The latter, passing through Koysh (1800 metres), finally arrived at the centre of highland Borodda administrative village (2800 metres) before noon. Having heard gunshots, local farmers

and officials in both villages had all fled into remote forests and concealed themselves with their livestock and other property.

The first raiders, about 150 strong, found nothing to ransack in Borodda and returned to Shabaro and Mella on the route different from that they had come. They and others all gathered in Shabaro and Mella in late afternoon and then descended to the Omo riverbank before dark. According to one survivor in Shabaro who witnessed the raiders from afar, the total number of them amounted to about 500.

The inhabitants who had escaped from these settlements kept themselves concealed in deep forests about a week for fear that they might encounter the raiders; those who had failed to run away had been mercilessly killed in their houses, in enset plots, or on the paths. The victims were two adult men and six adult women, including one pregnant woman, and their nine children, all of them in Mella, Shabaro, and Falaha. When the survivors returned home, they found more damage. Every bit of property had been ransacked in Mella and Shabaro, while nothing had been taken in Koysh and Borodda. In the former settlements, all of the livestock, cash, and purchased commodities such as clothes, shoes, radios, flashlights, umbrellas, pens, soap, salt and condiments, hoes, sickles, agricultural tools, and even pots had been stolen. There had never been such a thorough looting. In Falaha, some escaped with their livestock, but others who had left alone found their livestock stolen. Informants in Mella claimed that the later raiders had included numerous women. Returning to the riverbank after the raid, men herded livestock carrying rifles, and women wore and carried as many things as possible.

It was commonly claimed that the perpetrators were *golde*. *Golde* (*golda*, or *goldiya*) is an Omotic designation of Surmic-speaking lowland agro-pastoralists, particularly the Bod'i who live in the lower Omo valley west of the Dime land.⁴ But some even claimed that the raiders were not only *golde* but also central highlanders they simply call *amaara* by representing the Amhara. They had heard some raiders addressing others loudly in Amharic. They had also witnessed some, although not many, who looked and dressed like *amaara*. Although it is difficult to confirm these statements, it is sure that the raid was staged under a meticulously planned design of routes, targets, armaments, and role allotments.

The day before, a similar attack had been attempted, presumably by the identical or fellow raiders, but it had been repelled by the local inhabitants of Wushkante, another lowland settlement near the Omo river which is located on another ridge and about one day's walk distant from the raided settlements. Unfortunately, news of this attempted attack had not yet reached the settlements.

As mentioned, this was not the first to have occurred. I collected information about the past attacks prior to it. I next summarise them.

Violence Prior to 1999

Contact During the Imperial Period

Although the Omotic term *golde* (*golda*) is not new,⁵ direct contact between the Malo (and other Omotic-speaking farmer groups) and the Surmic-speaking agro-pastoralists seemed minimal. Elders, however, remember slight contacts with *golde* in the imperial

⁴ Those called *golde* by Omotic speakers call themselves *me'en*. They are divided into seven subgroups: Chirim, Mela, Nyomoni, Gabiyo, K'asha, Bokol, and Baiti, of which Chirim and Mela are usually designated *Bod'i* by outsiders (Fukui 1979: 149). They have a generic and derogative designation *su* for Omotic-speaking farmers in the middle Omo valley, excluding the Ch'ara.

⁵ The term *golda* is found in European travelers' accounts dating back to the late 19th century (Abbadie 1890; Borelli 1890).

time. Young *golde* men occasionally appeared in weekly markets at Banka, then an Amhara-settled town in northwestern Malo, but were more commonly encountered at markets in Dimeland. Although the Malo were rarely victimised, Doola farmers living between the Malo and Dime lands such as Kotani, later depopulated and now abandoned, suffered cattle thefts by *golde*. It was like that. When the keeper of the communal cattle, normally a farmer or his boy, was herding roughly 100 cattle, several *golde* men would suddenly come with firearms and take the cattle. They would rarely shoot at or injure the cattle keeper or attack or even enter farmers' settlements. Although the Malo now regard *golde* as entirely merciless, brutal murderers, and greedy ransackers, older people remember *golde* as originally not being so violent as they are now.

Violence in 1976

Things completely changed following the demise of the imperial regime. On 9 March 1976, the northern Malo settlements of Wushkante were suddenly attacked. Almost all of the cattle and other livestock were stolen; hundreds of local inhabitants, including women and children, were indiscriminately killed; and local dwellings were totally devastated by fire. The next day, raiders appeared in Shaale, Dala, and Koza, and others attacked a number of Banka Gara Haste settlements. They all went back to the Omo River on the day.

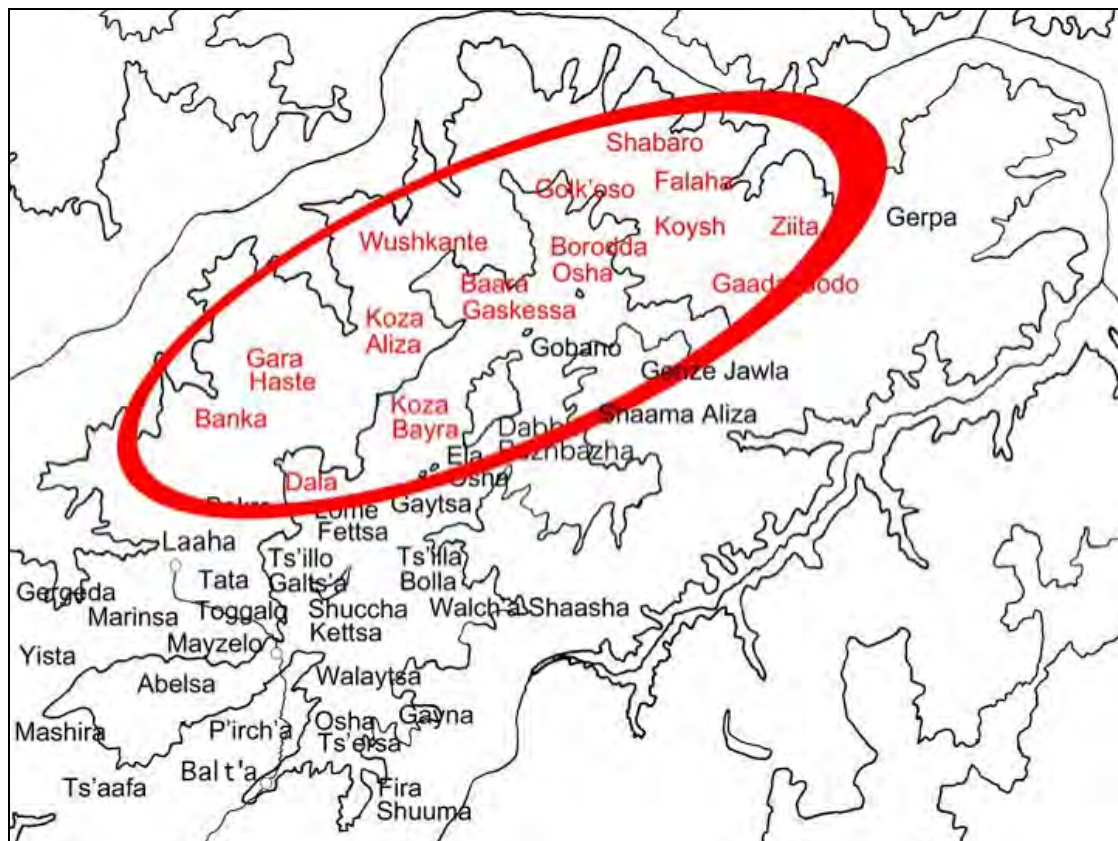


Fig. 2 Coverage and Distribution of Malo Settlements Met by Attacks in 1976

At this time, their fellows raided Mella, Shabaro, Golk'oso, Falaha, Koysh, Borodda, Ziita, and Gada, almost all of the northeastern Malo settlements both in the lowlands and the highlands. Local inhabitants had never seen such attacks before, and most of them had never even seen *golde*. They did not understand what was happening. A number of men, instead of escaping into remote thickets, tried to protect their dwellings with spears and shields (their traditional arms) against the attackers who were armed with guns and machetes; in consequence, that brought about an unprecedented number of casualties. No Malo farmers had any firearms, but the former Amhara landholders who had remained there had some and fought with them. Although the extent of the damage is difficult to estimate, at least more than 1000 or as many as several thousand Malo farmers were killed in one week. It was a massacre the likes of which the Malo had never experienced.

People now understand that it was the first in a series of raids perpetrated by *golde*, but they think that it was not initiated by *golde*, but primarily plotted as revenge by the Amhara, who had lost their status as landowners and officials and had fled to the lower Omo valley out of fear of imprisonment and punishment by Malo farmers after the imperial demise. People believe that such a large-scale and thorough attack was not familiar with *golde*, but with Amhara and other highlanders. Survivors witnessed former Amhara landowners among the attackers.⁶

After this terrible incident, food and clothes were distributed as emergency aid by the government and the evangelical missionary church, though no livestock returned to them. Dozens of peripheral settlements near the Omo River were soon permanently abandoned.

Violence in Late 1980s

For the next decade, there was no obvious violent conflict in the land. However, in 1988, Abba near Banka, a once densely populated but then frontier settlement in northern Malo, was suddenly attacked. No other settlement was attacked. Sixty to seventy *golde* came to attack Abba. The next year, several small Doola settlements between Malo and Dime were raided and later abandoned. Malo farmers became anxious about the increasing risk of being attacked again.

⁶ Fukui (2002), who was staying in Bod'i land at that time, was informed that former Amhara landowners supplied 200 *golde* gunmen with five bullets each and guided the route. Six chiefs of seven *me'en* subgroups, excluding the Bokol, joined the attacks. He noted that they had attacked Konta settlements to the north of Malo the year before.

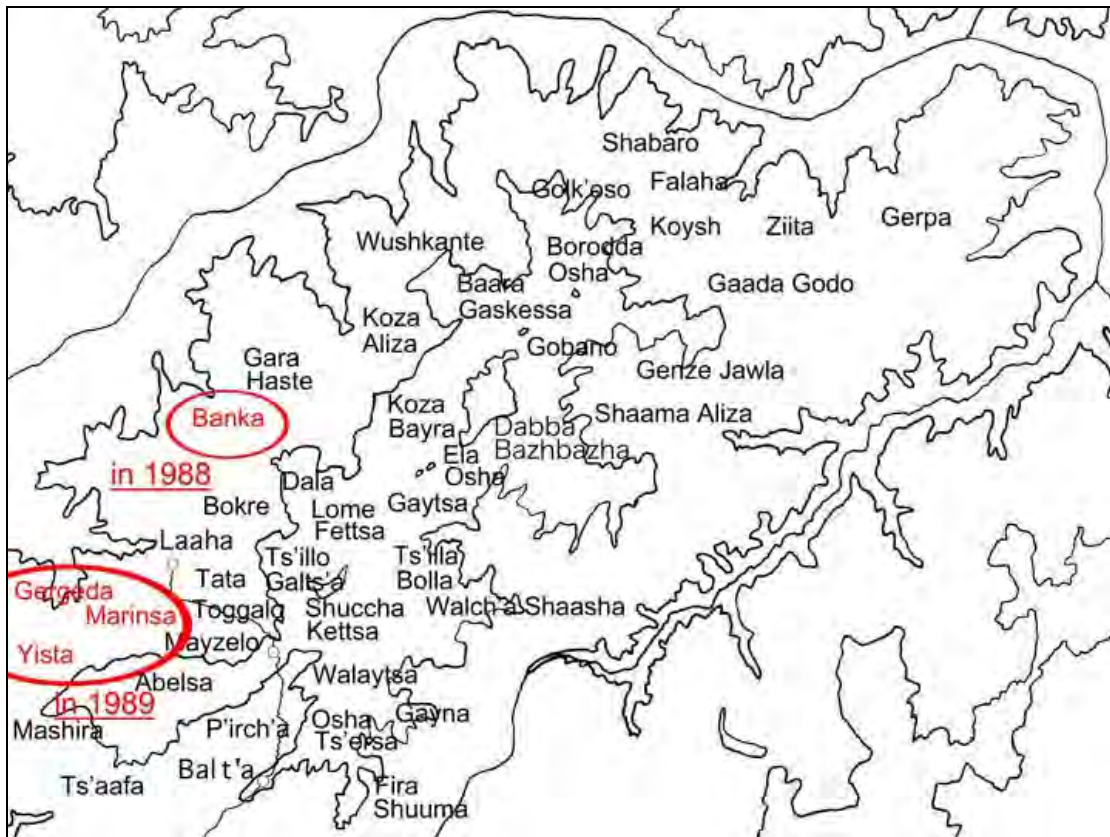


Fig. 3 Location of Malo and Doola Settlements Met by Attacks in Late 1980s

Violence in Early 1990s

The next one occurred on 18 June 1991, only a month and a half after the collapse of the Derg regime. The route and area of attack were different from those in 1976. Raiders first appeared in Banka. The locals instantly understood what was happening; putting up no resistance, they escaped into the thickets. Nonetheless, 190 farmers were killed. The raiders included some *golde* women and boys, who took away several local girls. At that time, only one old gun called *shurkte* was kept by a local official. The next day the perpetrators looted the district capital Laaha, which were totally unguarded by police due to the recent political upheaval.⁷

In less than one year, *golde* appeared in the northeastern Malo settlements of Shabaro/Mella, Falaha, Koysh, and Golk'oso. More than 70 inhabitants were killed in Shabaro/Mella and Falaha. In Mella, 18 dwellings, about half of all dwellings there, were burned to the ground.

In 1993, raiders appeared in Wushkante and stole more than 200 cattle while inflicting no human casualties. They attempted to attack Banka Gara Haste the next day, but were repelled; by this time, local officials and some residents had been given about 30 rifles by the district government for self-defence.

⁷ According to Fukui (2005), about 160 people, most of them young men from Bod'i (Mela and Chirim), joined the party. According to Malo informants, just before the attack in Malo, Koysha settlements, including Borodda and Okashe north of the Omo River, were heavily attacked, and at least 100 inhabitants were killed, the incident Fukui (2005) assumes to have taken place on 16 April 1991.

This information was collected in northern Malo settlements, but later confirmed by the district government office in Laaha. The office estimates that more than 300 people were killed and over 1000 cattle and 700 sheep and goats were stolen during the attacks in early 1990s.

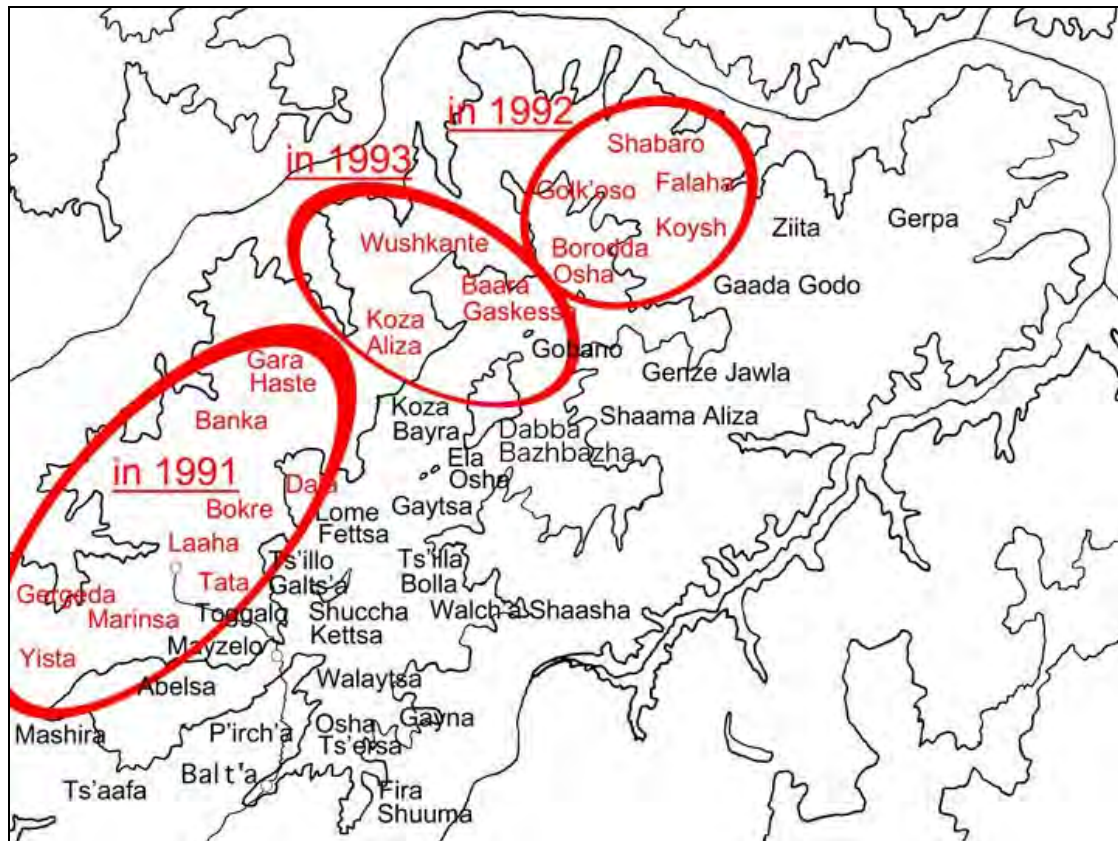


Fig. 4 Location of Malo and Doola Settlements Met by Attacks in Early 1990s

Discussion

Emergence of Deadly Link between Groups with Minimal Contact

Because the groups had no territorial contact or direct trade route, the links between the Malo (and other mountain farmers) in the middle Omo valley and *golde* (the Bod'i and other lowland agro-pastoralists) in the lower Omo valley had been rare until the end of imperial era. Though the latter stole some cattle from the former, they were basically not brutal.

When the imperial regime collapsed in 1974, the Amhara settlers lost their status as landowners and officials and some of them fled into the lower Omo valley, where lowland agro-pastoralists lived and state control had never fully arrived.⁸ There, the

⁸ Amhara retreat into the lowlands at this time was not their first. Local Amhara concealed themselves in the riverine forests and waged guerrilla war against the Italian rule (1936–1941), although the reality was rather some raiding of peripheral settlements on both riversides (Malo and Konta/Koysha). Probably some Amhara reached the lower Omo valley and made contact with the agro-pastoralists at that time. When they returned after the Italian period, they maintained these relations. Fleming (1994: 451) noted that, “one large Amhara landowner in Malo is widely accused by Dime Amhara of selling guns and bullets to Bodis in exchange for ivory and leopard skins.”

Amhara presumably plotted a war of retaliation and encouraged the agro-pastoralists to join them by providing them with bullets. This was completely different from the anti-Italian guerrilla war where the Amhara had fought by themselves. For the Bod'i, to join the attacks was beneficial because they had just stopped raiding neighbouring Dime farmers and had also been pushed back by their southern neighbours, the Mursi, in the early 1970s. Therefore, initiated by refugee Amharas full of vengeful feelings and familiar with local topography, the attacks were in substance carried out by the agro-pastoralists longing for territorial resources.

The attacks were totally one sided because there was a clear imbalance of power between the attackers and the attacked. While the attackers carried guns and machetes, the attacked were void of these arms. As a result, the attacks initiated by localised Amhara made a deadly link between the Malo (and other farmers) and the *golde* agro-pastoralists who pass through the most marginal Omo riverbank.

Patterns of Occurrence of Violent Attacks

After the first attacks in mid-1970s, nothing happened for more than a decade, but attacks resumed in late 1980s. There is a pattern to their occurrence. Most of the incidents occurred in the political interregnums of the Ethiopian state, that is, soon after the collapse of the imperial and Derg regimes in 1974 and 1991, respectively. In these periods, state power was practically nonexistent because nearly no policemen guarded the land and no soldiers rushed to suppress violence. Modern arms were abundantly supplied to the lowland raiders by traders who had obtained them from disbanded ex-soldiers and ex-policemen. In these political interregnums, violent attacks intensified not only in the middle Omo valley, but also in the lower Omo valley (Turton 1994).

To be added, nearly all of the attacks broke out during the season locally called *assura*, that is, from approximately March to May when the Omo River is at its lowest and is easiest to cross and ford. From December to May, local farmers in peripheral settlements are sensitive to night bonfire in the Omo riverbank which tell the coming of *golde* scouts. The seasonality of the attacks is partly related to the lowland subsistence economy where that season is the hungry season (cf. Abbink 2000b).

Another point is that the attackers who carried guns and machetes raided the farmers with no arms. Furthermore, different from reciprocal ethnic conflicts in the lower Omo valley, the attacked farmers have gotten no means or opportunities to counter-attack for retaliation.

Changes of Violent Attacks in Style and Aim

Whereas the attacks have been staged in deliberate manners, they seem to have undergone noticeable changes in style and aim.

In the first attack in 1976, innumerable inhabitants, likely exceeding 1000, were killed. In the more recent attacks of the 1990s, the casualties were much less. This decrease may be largely due to the fact that farmers have learned how to escape. However, the number of stolen cattle and other livestock did not decrease. Likewise, many dwellings were devastated by fire in the first attacks. In the latest attacks, however, there was no burning. However, the range of looted property has grown. In the latest attack, nearly every property, including local products such as pots and agricultural tools, was looted. It is claimed that *golde* women served as porters. The Malo think of the first attacks as a kind of war (*ola*) but of the later ones simply as robberies (*bonk'e*).

Another to mention is that, more recent attempted attacks have been repelled by local inhabitants. The current regional regime allows an increased number of firearms and hatchets to be registered for self-defence purposes in the marginal settlements raided before.

These changes may be summarised as follows. In the first raids, the attackers may have tried to subordinate the Malo for future expansion by doing as much damage as possible, as they had done with the neighbouring Dime in early 1970s. Later, however, they narrowed the aims to looting because they became to face growing local resistance.

Social and Environmental Consequences of Violent Attacks

Following the repeated attacks, a large number of inhabitants have migrated and numerous settlements and fields near the Omo River have been permanently abandoned (Fig. 5), though the process of depopulation there seems to have already started in Italian period. Farmers now regard the riverbank as unsafe and often set fire to the vegetation to keep a clear sight of it. A series of violent attacks have not only changed the lives of inhabitants but also transformed local landscape and environmental uses.

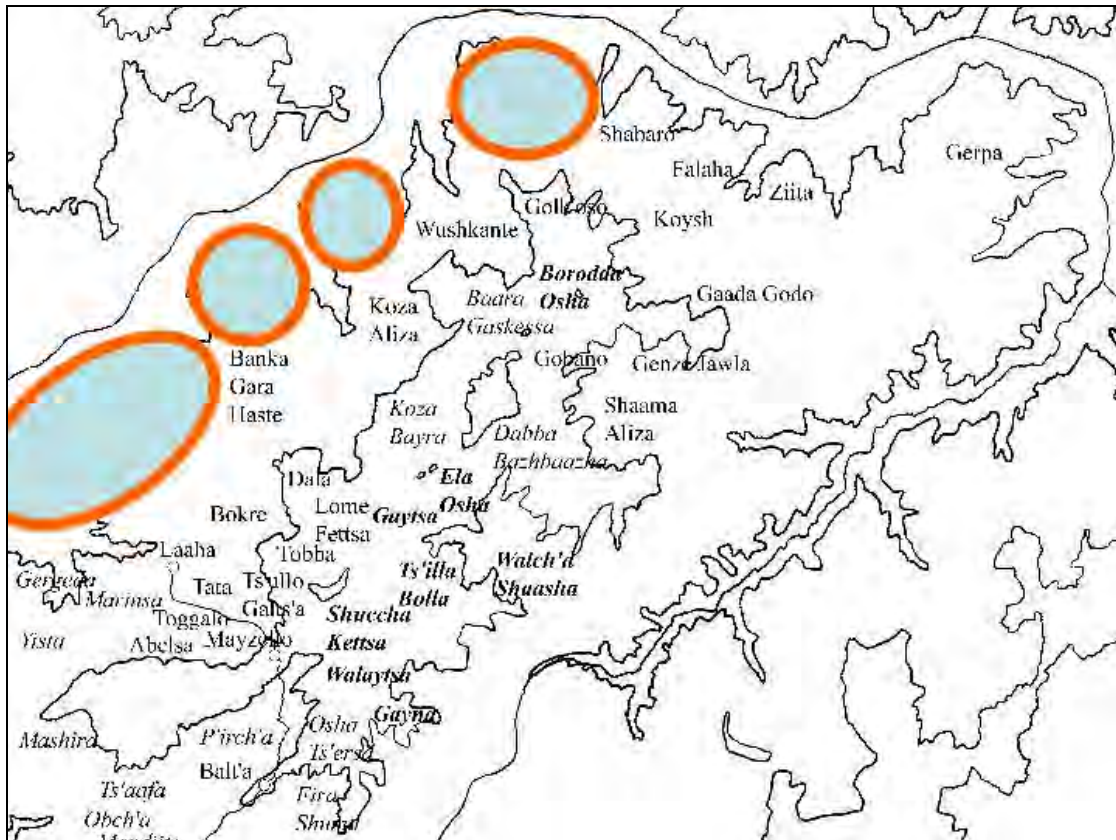


Fig. 5 Location and Coverage of Permanently Abandoned Settlements in Malo

Conclusion

While there was little contact between the Malo in the middle Omo valley and the agro-pastoralists in the lower Omo during the imperial time, the first attacks in 1976 designed by ex-landlord Amharas formed a deadly link between them. Because the farmers had no way to get modern arms, subsequent attacks mostly staged in the political interregnums were one sided and received no counter-attacks.

While the human casualty remarkably decreased between the attacks, the looting of livestock and other property seems to have intensified and enlarged. Although there is still an obvious imbalance of power between the farmers and the agro-pastoralists, local farmers have gradually repelled the raiding attempts by defending themselves under the current regime. Especially since 1999, when the regional government ordered the agro-pastoralists to disarm and sanctioned with military force those who disobeyed, no obvious attacks have taken place.

In 2005, however, scouts reappeared in the riverbank. Farmers living near the river are once again on the alert. Although they have some arms, they understand that *golde* will come to raid them again if the state power retreats. They still live on the verge of violent attacks.

References

- Abbadie, Antoine d'. 1890. *Géographie de l'éthiopie*, Paris: Gustave Mesnil.
- Abbink, Jon. 1993. 'Ethnic Conflict in the 'Tribal Zone': The Dizi and Suri in Southern Ethiopia.' *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 31(4), pp. 675-682.
- 2000a. 'Violence and the Crises of Conciliation: Suri, Dizi and the State in South-west Ethiopia.' *Africa*, Vol. 70(4), pp. 527-550.
- 2000b. 'Restoring the Balance: Violence and Culture Among the Suri of Southern Ethiopia.' In: Göran Aijmer and Jon Abbink (eds.), *Meanings of Violence: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, Oxford and New York: Berg, pp. 77-100.
- Borelli, Jules. 1890. *Éthiopie méridionale*, Paris: Ancienne Maison Quantin.
- Donham, Donald. 1986. 'Old Abyssinia and the New Ethiopian Empire: Themes in Social History.' In: Donald Donham and Wendy James (eds.), *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 3-48.
- Fleming, Harold. 1994. 'The Dime of Gemu-Gofa: Ethnography of a Tragedy.' In: Claude Lepage (ed.), *Etude éthiopiennes, Tome I*, Paris: Société Française des Etudes Ethiopiennes, pp. 449-451.
- Fujimoto, Takeshi. 2002. 'T'ef (*Eragrostis tef* (Zucc.) Trotter) Cultivation among the Malo, Southwestern Ethiopia.' In: Baye Yimam *et al.* (eds.) *Ethiopian Studies at the End of the Second Millennium*, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, pp. 767-784.
- 2006. 'Social Stratification and its Relevance to Ethno-history: A Case in Malo, Southwestern Ethiopia.' In: Siegbert Uhlig (ed.) *Proceedings of the XVth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 92-103.
- Fukui, Katsuyoshi. 1979. 'Cattle Calour Symbolism and Inter-Tribal Homicide among the Bodi.' In: K. Fukui *et al.* (eds.), pp. 147-177.
- 1994. 'Conflict and Ethnic Interaction: The Mela and their Neighbours.' In: K. Fukui *et al.* (eds.), pp. 33-47.

- 2002. 'Pastoralists' Raiding and Sacking of Farmers: An Analysis of the Repeated Conflicts in Southwestern Ethiopia.' In: Hisashi Fujiki and Takehisa Udagawa (eds.), *Trajectories of Attacks and Defenses (Kogeki-to Boei-no Kiseki)*, Tokyo: Toyoshorin, pp. 210-242. (in Japanese)
- 2005. 'Repeated Conflicts and Spatial Socialisation: Cultural Settings of Integration and Exclusion in Surmic-Speaking Societies.' In Katsuyoshi Fukui (ed.), *Socialised Ecological Resources (Shakaikasareru Seitaishigen)*, Kyoto: Kyoto University Press, pp. 323-356. (in Japanese)
- and David Turton (eds.) 1979. *Warfare among East African Herders*, Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- and John Markakis (eds.) 1994. *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, London: James Currey,
- Todd, Dave. 1979. 'War and Peace Between the Bodi and Dime of Southwestern Ethiopia.' In: K. Fukui *et al.* (eds.), pp. 211-225.
- Tornay, Serge A. 1979. 'Armed Conflicts in the Lower Omo Valley, 1970-1976: An Analysis from within Nyangatom Society.' In: K. Fukui *et al.* (eds.), pp. 97-117.
- Turton, David. 1994. 'Mursi Political Identity and Warfare: The Survival of an Idea.' In: K. Fukui *et al.* (eds.), pp. 15-31.
- Vaughan, Sarah. 2006. 'Responses to Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia's Southern Region.' In: David Turton (ed.), *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*, Oxford: James Currey, pp. 181-207.

„How we let go war“

Echi Christina Gabbert with Ginno Ballo¹

The paper will focus on the recent deliberate turn towards peace in Arbore, highlighting the role that women play in the discussions. I will present positions of men and women, their roles in and opinions on war and peace historically as well as their arguments for their decision to propose peace rather than instigating war.

Women's Perspectives on War and Peace in Arbore² – Southern Ethiopia

Why does she (Arbore) among all countries keep peace?
Arbore – this wicked old one – no one can reach her.
She isn't afraid of war, is fighting.
She is fighting but she does not like war.
(Grandmother of Horra 2005)³

Women and war

The Arbore look back on a long history of warfare and conflict reflected in myths, songs and described in historical and anthropological accounts (Ayalew 1995, 1997, Donaldson Smith 1969, Gabbert 2006, Girke 2006, Miyawaki 1996, 1997, 2006, Strecker 1979, Tadesse 1997, 1999). Notions of strength and virility of the warriors have long shaped Arbore identity. Concepts for the need to kill game or enemies or go cattle raiding are found in concepts like *ginda* (urge to hunt or kill) and *halo* (need to take revenge, see also Bassi 2005: 102, 276). But there is yet another reason for a man to go to war or to hunt, called *koora*, which is the insulting mocking that girls and women can impose on men who are courting them. During times of war women have the role of encouraging the men through a ritualized form of insult (*ililshin*) and through asking for blessings from the *k'awot*, an elder with ritual power, to ensure protection for their men on the battlefield. In the past ten years though, the Arbore have developed a strong position on refraining from interethnic conflicts. Elders and women are among the ones who particularly watch the path of peace with all its consequences.

¹ Echi Gabbert, PhD candidate. Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Advokatenweg 36, 06114 Halle, Germany, e-mail: gabbert@eth.mpg.de, South Omo Museum and Research Center (SORC), Jinka, Ethiopia.

Ginno Ballo from Arbore conducted and recorded most of the interviews used in this paper in the years 2005-2006 and assisted with the transcriptions and analysis during his stay at the Max Planck Institute in Halle, Germany in 2007.

² The Arbore, also called Hor, are a Cushitic agro-pastoral group of around 5,000 people living in the Rift Valley north of Lake Stephanie close to the Kenyan border in the South Omo Zone of Southwestern Ethiopia.

³ In order to keep the anonymity of people, all names of interview participants have been changed. The used names only indicate the gender and familial status of a person (e.g. father or grandmother).

A note on Gender and Pastoralism

...being public does not inherently render valuations more widely held, more deeply felt, or more socially significant. Gender valuations may, indeed, be widely held not only in the absence of public validation, but sometimes in contrast to public valuations. (Holtzman, 2002: 262)

Women in Arbore historically play an important supportive part in all stages of warfare. Many of the actions are based on role commitment of men and women leading to respect in the different stages of personhood and has been described as a source for cultural self esteem (see also Strecker 2006, Epple 2006). Self-esteem and threat to it play a major part in the patterns of the warfare supporting activities that I will describe in the first part of the paper. This approach is also meant to contribute to a number of works that reconsider the representation of roles of women in pastoralist societies in which women's multiple social identities and identifications are taken into account (Cornwall 2005, Hodgson 2000, Holtzman 2002, Lydall 2005, Sagawa 2006). With this approach divisions like private/public and political/domestic are articulated respective to their complementary rather than their dividing character.

In the recent efforts of the Arbore starting in the 1990's to reach a general peace with all their neighbors, documented by films and articles (Strecker and Pankhurst 2003, Pankhurst 2006) women have built up an active position outside the formal settings that will be described in the second part of the paper. While all patterns and social roles instigating war are still available and therefore possible, the efforts for peace have been successful. This raises questions for the reasons behind this. By following the actors, actions and discourses in the different stages of war and peace I want to show some of the different arenas and ways of exerting agency at different places in different times of war and peace processes.⁴

1 The historical arena

Koora - what's at stake

Women also have something evil to do with war.
(Father of Lago, 2006)

The man who is afraid of the war, of course he will be insulted.
(Grandmother of Horra, 2005)

To understand the concept of *koora*, triggered by a rhetorical act within the courting process when a girl or woman is mocking a man who has not yet killed big game or human enemies, one has to look at some features of the personal identity of Arbore men.

Like you want to study, to make a doctor to become a professor, in your country the one who has not studied anything is a good for nothing. Here we want to become a killer. That is like our madness. He will have songs, *gobba*, *karile*, he will wear a *match* (mother's belt) and beautiful adornments during the *nyaar*

⁴ Questions on the choices about and reasons for how these roles are fulfilled or rejected are not subject of the paper. This is subject of my PhD theses in which the discussion of the gender aspect is embedded in a wider frame of factors that support the emergence of cultural change from war to peace.

ceremony. His adornment will stand out from the others. He will be adored. (*much affirmation by the women in the discussion*). This is a sweet thing of war. (Father of Lago, 2006)

Killing of enemies with “sweet blood” as a fertility-producing act for the Arbore community as a whole has been described by Tadesse (1999: 52ff). I want to throw some light on the personal and interpersonal communicative actions, which give a slightly different view on the construction and significance of the killer status regarding personal identity and gender relations. The virility and strength of a man is strongly admired throughout the community. Killers in Arbore have a good reputation and receive much admiration from everybody. They will be praised in songs, they will be adorned as a killer in daily life and in certain rituals and they can wear the full range of insignia of a killer during the most important ritual in Arbore (*nyaar*) when a new generation set is initiated. Additionally to these visual markers, a killer gains other benefits, e.g. an exclusive communicative means: He has the right to *d’ad’a*, which is the act of using the fact of having killed in verbal arguments. Self-praise is generally not seen as appropriate in daily speech acts. A killer though is allowed to talk about his heroic acts to excel an opponent in a discussion or to react to any other form of insult. Accordingly men who have not killed are always in danger of being humiliated. A man who has not killed is carrying a feeling called *ginda* in his stomach and this creates a strong urge to kill. To become a killer or a successful hunter is the only way to be relieved from it. *Ginda* is strongly evoked as comparative identity in regard to others who have achieved to get rid of it. This difference of status between killers and men who have not killed becomes evident in many trigger situations and can get enforced to humiliate the non-killers. One example are the rituals that take place to praise a successful hunter (*meerat, gobba*), when killers can show their superiority by throwing ashes into the faces of men who have not killed yet. In ritual settings and in song performances, when killers are praised, the feeling of not having achieved a state of “*gindalessness*” might trigger an ecstatic state of emotion, a mixture of anger and distress, which results in a form of possession trance. Certain situations induce and enhance the feeling of *ginda*. Additional to the ones just mentioned above, being mocked and insulted by women in general and being mocked by the woman or girl a man is courting specifically does not only belong to these situations but also directly result in actions. This situation is called *koora*. In this sense *koora* refers to the evocation of *ginda* (need to kill in general) as well as the related concept of *halo* (the need to kill in revenge for a former killing), or a combination of both through insult. Let me give examples for two situations a man could meet when courting a girl or a woman.

Mocking that raises ginda

Father of Lago	“... then give me an anklet” she says. When she says “Give me an anklet” she looks at you. The man who has gone hunting has killed something – she has heard a bit about you: “The father of so and so is strong, antelope and everything he has killed when hunting.” She says this, she likes to be courted by someone like that. But to the one she has not heard about, whose name (reputation) is not strong (she says): “What are you? How can you court me? Get out of here!” that is what she says. “I am right to make fun of you! I am right to make fun of you! Since you have been born, you have drunk and have not seen anything. Who am I to sweet talk you now?” she says.
Mother of Armar	Then he takes his hunting friend.
Father of Lago	Then, “gosh, then gosh, what did she say, this girl, what again

did she say, this girl” that is what one says.
(*Laughter*)
Father of Baro Then I become angry.
Father of Lago Then we become angry. That same night you leave.
Mother of Armar “Hunting friend.”
Father of Lago Then he looks for a hunting friend. “Hunting friend. Today, a girl called so and so, this one. She insulted me. The one she insulted was me.”
Father of Ello She insulted me.
Echi Gabbert Insulted me.
Father of Lago Insulted me, therefore I will not stay,” he says. “Then, then we will go together, hunting friend.”
Father of Baro “Come”
(Workshop discussion, 2004)

Mocking that transfers halo

The woman speaks like this:

I do not want a man from Arbore. You are an Arbore and I will not accept you. I will accept the man who has killed my former husband. We do not have anything to talk about. Get away from my side immediately.
(Ginno, 2007)

Like in the situation described before the man has to leave silently after the woman’s speech. The exaggeration of preferring the killer of her own husband to the man who has not yet killed is one of the harshest insults that can be thought of. In this way her want for revenge (*halo*) has not only been expressed, it has been transferred to him. Something painful has entered his body resulting in an obsession, which also is part of the feeling called “*ginda*”. His duty then would be to take the revenge for the killing of her former husband or in the case of girls, the killing of a brother, a former boy friend or her father. He then would go and try to fulfill his duty to show his real interest and love for the woman or girl. The “shame-rage spirals” following face threatening insults described by Scheff (Scheff 2000: 151) come close to an understanding of the concept of *ginda* in Arbore. A woman, who hierarchically stands formally well below any man, has the right to call him a weakling until he has proven the contrary. What results is not described with a simple emotion like shame or embarrassment. It actually covers many of the shame rage cues listed by Scheff like alienation (rejection, dumping), confusion (stunned, blank, hollow), ridiculousness (idiotic, foolish), inadequacy (helpless, powerless, weak, inferior, insufficient etc.), discomfort (restless, tense, anxious, nervous, hyperactive), hurt (offended, upset, dejected) and anger (hot tempered, enraged, furious). As *ginda* is triggered by various situations and communicative acts a man with *ginda* goes through different stages of intensity of the connected set of feelings through time. But clear is the necessary and obsessive character of the consequences of the man’s emotional turmoil. As a step in the courting process this form of insult does not leave many options: “There is nothing left for you to do. You just go and proof not to be a coward.”

Mocking and courting

Mother of Sirba Why I insult him. He courts me, he holds my wrist, he holds

Echi Gabbert	my leather apron, I resist. When I resist, he twists my wrists. I then say: “What is wrong with you? You who twist my wrist? Not one thing you did for which you stood up, you have no right to play the man on me.” I see.
	Long laughter
Mother of Sirba	“You senseless carrion. Not once you went and now you wring my wrist. Oh, what maleness have you ever achieved. You like a whore’s you twist my wrists”. That is what I say. That man, then something enters his body.
Father of Baro	He trembles
Mother of Sirba	That boy, again, tomorrow. I will accept him, see. Tomorrow he becomes my fate. When he went and this time has killed something, then he has returned, he has bound me. The age mates enter the talk.
Father of Ello	Koora
Mother of Sirba	Then, when he reacts to my mocking I will accept him, then.
(Workshop discussion, 2004)	

Humiliations by girls and women trigger and enhance the latent feeling of inferiority any man with *ginda* might already have. The formal role this plays in courting, as a way to prove real interest throws light on some of the characteristics of personal identity and its constitution. The inversion of gender roles carries a certain degree of irony. If the (inferior) woman has the right and power to humiliate the (superior) man, the humiliation is raised to higher power because of her inferiority, which then urges him to react with killing of big game or an enemy. In other words: girls and women who formally do not have much to say in the most common actions of a man, are in the powerful position to send men off to kill and thus trigger an action, which can be seen as the epitome of all self-assertive actions. Regarding personal identities, this might be one of the moments where women master one of the powerful decisions in a person’s life course: The man approaches a woman for courting, possibly there are other candidates, he is asking for her agreement, and he might be posed questions and riddles to check his cleverness and integrity. Her agreement might be expressed through a humiliating insult that then has to be deconstructed by his actions. If he succeeds, he is officially accepted as a boy friend and this could open the possibility to marry the girl and pay bride wealth for her, which then will turn her formally into his possession.⁵ In the course of the process the insult has become a compliment, a challenge and a promise both humiliating and exalting. The private context turns into a public affair and then is dealt with the official means of customary law of the age set. A girl who rejects a man after he has reacted to her insults with killing or hunting could be forced by her age mates to stick to the procedure she has initiated to accept him as her boy friend. Not

⁵ This is an ideal type of koora-induced marriage that is not frequently found. Marriages in Arbore can both be arranged with little or no say of the girl involved, or with the agreement of the girl. It can also happen that a successful courting leads to a formal relationship of a young couple but has to be ended because of other marriage arrangements.

only the Arbore but also the Wata Wando and Borana of Southern Ethiopia are known for using *koora* as a powerful communicative tool in courting processes.⁶

On the other side of the possibilities of humiliation of the non-killers stands the exaltation of killers and hunters in everyday settings, e.g. the boasting between girls when talking about their boy friends or the many formal and informal expressions of pride all the female members of a homestead show at the return of a successful hunter or killer.

Ililishin - on the way to the battlefield

Mother of Armar	The brave ones. She, when the war has said „ku“ (<i>sound of guns</i>) „ooh“ she said „ililil“. Vagina of your mother she says, Arbore, if she is not afraid. ⁷
Father of Ello	The women?
Mother of Armar	Go! You are stronger, fight! The women that is their right. Ililisho, this is for the brave ones, hearing this he does not sit still. The men she sends them, running off. She puts the Arbore men on their feet, having insulted their mother like this, they cannot refrain from war.

(Interview, 2006)

“*Gele ege mony*” meaning: “Vagina of your mother”, is used as insult when men are leaving the homestead to go for a battle. Or it can be put like this: “Today you want to come back, then slip back into my body, where you came from when you were born, today you let me survive, your vagina.” These insults are shouted out loudly so the men will stand the hardship of war. If somebody is known to have been cowardly before, the insult can be put like this: „*Gele ingotako infaamita*“. “Back into your mother’s vagina.” Or “*Gela ingotako, bore infaamita*.” “Your mother’s vagina, or will you get back into the earth.”

These insults are meant to raise aggressive feelings in a similar vain as described with the courting-mocking-killing spiral. But more than the *koora* insults, with a personal possible causal chain effect, the extreme character of the insults uttered together with a highly tensed and high pitched shouting of “*ilililil*” create a more energetic provocative supportive tenor at the very moment, when the men are on the way to the battlefields. In the private courting situation there is still a certain possibility for reflection and thus a way to ignore the insults or to rate them into insignificance if a man should decide not to court the women any further. The decision to go hunting or raiding has still an individual character. In the situation where men collectively go off to war, the public insults serve as a mere trigger to release the full aggressiveness that is needed in the battle. The vulgarity of the insults is proportional to the need for the immediacy of their effect. Rage that is raised in this way will help to fight well and

⁶ It is said that it is finally not in a person’s hands to relieve himself from *ginda* as it is seen as fate. If one searches too much for the relief of his *ginda* it will be contra productive as this resembles a self-curse. This can be seen aligned to the many rules of humbleness that are generally valid in Arbore. They keep people from exalting themselves in regard to the Sky God (*Wak’*) and in relation to others. A man who is not successful in his *koora* action might still be accepted by the girl, taking into account that he has taken the risk and suffering similar to a successful hunt.

⁷ „*Ku*“, the sound of the gun shots, „*ooh*“ a sound to overcome fright and „*ililil*“ all are ideophones. Ideophones are often used in Arbore descriptive speech (see also Lydall 2000).

outplay feelings of fear. Noticeable is the notion expressed in the first passage above that only the bravest women are said to be able to articulate the worst insults, which contain the naming of her own genitals in public, so her sons and husband can get equally brave.

Battlefields revisited

Enemy bullets are believed to become very light the moment they are fired. They simply fly into the sky missing the targets at which they were aimed. This is due to the mystical power of the *qawots* and the *mach*, cowrie belt of the mothers. (Tadesse 1997: 679)

As soon as the men have left the settlement and are on the way to the battle or cattle raid⁸, there is a set of actions that will be performed by the female members of the homesteads. Firstly, every woman will put on her mother belt, the *match* and roll up her leather apron, the *sarra* that normally reaches down to her ankles. The *match* was made after the birth of a woman's first child. It is made with the leather of a wedding cowhide and decorated with the cowrie shells cut off the first household items. The leather apron is connected to the role of the mother as birth giver and protector of her children and the *match* is said to have mystical protective power.

In a next step women with a special status, namely the wives the members of a generation set whose children have already been initiated into the following generation set either go to the *k'awot* or to another elder of the bracelet wearing clans, who has the power to bless and curse. They bring butter, enter the house and smear the butter on the head of the powerful man while asking for blessings for their men and sons on the battlefield. This kind of stroke-blessing is called *gileeto*. The blessing wishes are directed to *Wak'*, the Arbore Sky God.

Women	Ini hanno dabsa si	Our sons give them protection
K'awot	Wak' siisa	<i>Wak'</i> gives
Women	Olo uru to hako.	Yours is the power today
Women	Moh yela wakey kubba mid'at kutto	The enemy <i>Wak'</i> should cut off his right hand
K'awot	Wak' kuta	<i>Wak'</i> cuts
Women	Nyaab il ta mid'at wak ay ballak k'iito	The enemy his right eye <i>Wak'</i> shall take away his sight
K'awot	Wak' ballasa	<i>Wak'</i> blinds
Women	Wakey ta oso dabsa siisa	<i>Wak'</i> shall protect them
K'awot	Wak' siisa	<i>Wak'</i> protects
Women	Wakey oso wal tip ar hoffoliito	<i>Wak'</i> shall bring them back safely
K'awot	Wak' arhoffolsha	<i>Wak'</i> brings back safely
Women	Nyaab kob tassu wak' d'iik fagga	The enemy in his shoes <i>Wak'</i> shall pour blood
K'awot	Wak' fagga	<i>Wak'</i> pours blood
Women	Nyaab kobtassu kan dibbegis	The enemy his shoes shall be turned upside down

⁸ There are several forms of warfare in Arbore distinguished by the number and status of participants and the purpose of the engagement (see also Tadesse 1999:69ff).

K'awot

Wak' dibbeese

Wak' turns upside down

In the meantime women who do not go for blessings to the *k'awot* boil water, grind coffee beans and while sitting at the hearth call for the Sky God (*Wak'*) with similar blessings that are used at the meeting with the *k'awot*.

During the day all women of the homestead collect cow dung so they can burn it in the fire of the cattle kraal at the return of the men. The fire will be lighted and the kraal is prepared for the own (and the raided) cattle. When they return the men will be blessed by the women with a mixture of water and milk. The successful killers or hunters will get special blessings. All these actions belong to the protective measures well beyond their practical sense, as the symbolical enhancement of the blessings is believed to play a major part in the war process.

At this point I end with the descriptions of roles, actions and concepts that can be attributed to the times and dynamics of war in Arbore all of which are still very present in memory and sentiment. Peace has become more stable since 1993, and the efforts of the advocates of peace in the Arbore community seem to have been successful especially when challenged by continuous attacks and killings of Arbore by their neighbors, e.g. the Hamar. Every killing gives motivation for new aggression and calls for revenge that until this point in time, for reasons yet to be put together have been successfully been "cooled down". Some of the tendencies I could roughly observe will be part of the second part of the paper.

2 The present dimension - Outlook off the battlefield

The place where they went out (*of the house*), why we started to hate war, here we insulted the men, then we saw how they did not come back and we became afraid. This is how we let go war.
(Grandmother of Horra, 2005)

The peace that we want, we cried for. *Wak'* has now given us this peace in which we dwell. *Wak'* has given peace to our land we say.
(Mother of Sirba, 2006)

We have not been getting enough sleep here in Arbore
(Grazmatch Surra in the film: Bury the Spear!, 2003)

The self-reflective criticism of the first comment is directly connected to the different ways women can apply to encourage a man to go to war that have been described in the first part of the paper. The comment shows a change of value that has to be accompanied with a change of perception and attitude. If women prefer peace to war, then their activities to instigate war should also be effected. Regarding the praise of the warriors it is partly observable. At the nightly dances the youths praise the killers and hunters as usual. This hints towards possible contradictions in identification processes because of the lack of big game in general and enemies in peaceful times. What is sung and praised is not lived anymore. Regarding *koora* and *ililshin* I have found another tendency: Older people involved in the peace process proclaim that people should refrain from these forms of encouragement. Although it still occurs, girls do not seem to apply the formalized insults as often as in former times. Additionally, the young men, if mocked, seem to not necessarily take the mocking as binding as in former times. If they identify with the peace process, they have reason not to react to insults as emotionally as

their fathers did. Today one can find people who do not use mocking anymore, people who use forms of mocking as in former times with a certain lack of realization of the challenge and people that use and react to mocking in a less serious way without the need of any killing activities. New criteria have emerged that “offer possibilities of optional identification” (Schlee 2002: 8) and this, in sum seems to decrease the significance of the process induced by *koora*. An analysis paying respect to individual choices concerning this communicative tool and their effect for general tendencies will be part of a future survey. Not only the verbal but also the visual markers that enhance the superiority of the killer status are part of the killer’s identity. Knowing this, the discussants in the 1993 Peace Ceremony in Arbore also criticized the ongoing use of killer’s insignia as an obstacle for lasting peace (Strecker/Pankhurst 2003). If visual, communicative, performative and social markers for killers lose significance this could be a sign of a change of values. At the same time it raises questions about the availability or need for substitutes of “lost” identities.

The other comments above more strongly refer to the weariness of war that is explicitly expressed when asking for reasons for the present times of peace in Arbore. Wars and conflicts have been part of Arbore reality and can be traced back to their oral recorded history starting a little before the Donaldson Smith Expedition in 1895, who described the Arbore already as well-armed and warlike (Donaldson Smith 1969, Miyawaki 2006). Conflicts with the troupes of Menelik, the ambiguous relation with the Italians, persisting conflicts with their deadly enemies the Maale and the Korre (Samburu) and the shifting conflicts with close neighboring groups like the Borana and Hamar have left many traces in Arbore’s history and present. Arbore have repeatedly been dispersed from their country because of war (Gabbert 2006, Ayalew1997).⁹ After the heavy battles with Menelik’s troupes and during the Italian occupation a whole area within the Arbore valley has become a symbol of the trauma of war: “People’s blood pierced the ground so much. Pierced it till it (*the ground*) was gone” is said. The battles the victims and bloodshed are seen as so horrible that even though the place exists, it is described as if it were gone, destroyed by blood and by the cruelties of war. Not only that this place called Banzo has never been used for settlements again. Since then the Arbore have never returned to the way they used to build their permanent mud houses. The style of provisional house building has been maintained instead. The consequences of constant destruction and resettlement have outlasted their pragmatic reasons and can now be seen as the symbolic manifestation of the past. The general awareness of the futility of war has also been expressed by choosing the same old battle site symbolically for a major peace ceremony in 1993. The ceremony was initiated by two elders: Aike Berinas from Hamar and Grazmatch Surra from Arbore asked several anthropologists who were working in the wider area of South Omo at that time for mediation in a large intergroup peace gathering with participants of twelve groups of the area. Not only the site but also the symbolism of the ceremony, with blunting and burying the spears, the exchange of symbols of peace and the calling for peace and cursing of war (for a thorough description see Pankhurst 2006, Girke 2007) all were meant to finally agree on lasting peace in the area. The one group that has since then most explicitly stuck to peace are the Arbore. The complex array of reasons for this is yet to be explained.

⁹ A discussion of the reasons for different conflicts are not part of this presentation. As a general statement I agree with Wolde that resources are, for the Arbore and their neighbors not a major issue for warfare. (Tadesse 1999:41)

Always inherent is some air of discrepancy between the ideal of the warlike past and the new peaceful identity, which is reflected in this commentary:

The one who talks war we dislike, the one who makes the needle with which one sews cloth we like, the one who makes the hoes we like, the one who makes the ax with which one cuts wood and build a house we like, the one who makes guns and bullets, may *Wak'* break his hands, *Wak'* may break his hand, blind his eyes. (Father of Lago 2006)

Recently, one could observe an increased visibility of women's opinion- building activities. Women have started to meet under the shade of trees as the men did for centuries to talk about different issues. Women's assemblies then meet with men's discussion groups and state their opinions. The influences of the Ethiopian State, the careful interpretation of Arbore *aada* (custom, tradition) in relation to outside influences and women's initiatives in farming and politics are among the issues discussed. This new forum provides a platform for arguing about the questions regarding war and peace in similar words, as the ones which I want to present at the end of this paper with an uncommented collection of "peace reasons" that have been expressed in a set of interviews. They touch on such diverse subjects as group size, changes in values and norms, emotions, economics, morality and politics, but all of them express a deep longing for peace that seems to have evolved out of a long history of war experience. Women have described one scene again and again in different ways, using different metaphors for the feeling of abysmal loss the moment one realizes that this time the own son or husband has been killed on the battlefield, ending the unity of the home forever, the whole that is created through different roles and complementary positions. The death of the husband will leave the right part of the house forever deserted: The metonymical clothes are returned instead of the body, the cow (milk) does not return while the herder has been killed, the coffee that was prepared while praying, ended up with no one to drink it, the empty stool of the father, the abandoned calabash. This desolate scene stands in harsh discrepancy with the moment were the bravest women would shout out the harshest insults to set her sons and husband off to the battle. The madness of war cannot be expressed more visibly.

The cow does not come back to you. You just had one. As she went you are brought back clothes only. This is what people hated so much. So we announced peace so seriously. (Grandmother of Horra, 2005)

What we hated, look. What we hated. The war, your child who just went in peace, does not come back to you, your „door“ of the house of the cattle kraal that you have closed (at night) , have drunk your milk, this milk will not come to you again, you will not find it, it has all been taken away. (Grandmother of Horra, 2005)

So the Arbore had a long loooooook on war. War, which again and again chases people away from their homeland. The country becomes bad, the people do not multiply. (...) The Arbore looked at this. War has something that is half empty, people do not increase, she decreases them, decreases them, they become smaller, Decreasing, instead of increasing. (Father of Lago, 2006)

So then, the Arbore, a man with life, what do you kill him for the vultures, for the hyena, kill him down to the ground for, for nothing. What do you kill them out of wits to the ground for, out of wits for the vultures, for the hyenas to eat, there is no reason for it.

I will also die like this, the other will also die like this, what do we erase (diminish) each other, what do we kill each other for, war reaches everybody, killing let us get away from it. Let us all live, cultivate the land, eat together, drink together. This we have understood in Arbore. We have talked this first.
(Father of Lago 2006)

They do not get buried, (the ones killed in war), they are not kept from your eyes, they are left in the wilderness, and people leave, you see your own child and pass by.
(Grandmother of Horra, 2005)

It (peace) was not because we were frightened, not because we lacked something we needed from our neighbors.
(Mother of Armar, 2006)

The one who brought this to our country, these are your white people (*addresses the anthropologist*). ...The one who works with metal, it will become bullets, will become guns, will become war.
(Mother of Armar, 2006)

People what they see and like, they will stay on its side, what they dislike they will leave. What they like they take, what they dislike they stop. War, we have seen it and left it. We have seen the good in it, we have seen the bad in it.
(Father of Baro, 2006)

Speech to the anthropologist:

Mother of Sirba	The morning, the morning. The morning when the cattle are let out, this I have, later the hoe with which I dig up the ground, that I have, the sack I wear on my back, that I have, the children I bring up, those I have
Mother of Armar	The grass I cut
Mother of Sirba	The grass I cut to build the house, that I have
Mother of Armar	The child I handed over (for marriage)
Mother of Sirba	Yes, the child I hand over, I follow the custom, our customs, (<i>addresses the anthropologist</i>), you came to study them, you saw them, how sweet it is, one sits down, you have your calabash, call for <i>Wak'</i> , directly there you came and saw it, <i>Wak'</i> may tomorrow show you all this, as long as I have that, what I hate though is (war) eeeeeet (<i>she imitates to sneeze her nose, indicating something that stinks</i>), I am a powerful person, I cursed her (war) say that is what she said. War is what I insulted. Say, she said this.
Mother of Armar	Peace

Bibliography

- Asmarom Legesse. 1973. *Gada. Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. New York, The Free Press.
- Ayalew Gebre. 1995. *The Arbore of Southern Ethiopia: A Study of Inter-Ethnic Relations, Social Organization and Production Practices*. MA: Theses. Addis Ababa: Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Administration, Addis Ababa University.
- Ayalew Gebre. 1997. 'Arbore Inter-tribal Relations: An Historical Account' In: Hogg, Richard (ed.). *Pastoralists. Ethnicity and the State in Ethiopia*. London, Haan Publishing:143-167.
- Bassi, Marco. 2005. *Decisions in the Shade. Political and Juridical Processes among the Oromo-Borana*. Trenton, Asmara: The Red Sea Press,
- Cornwall, Andrea. 2005. 'Introduction: Perspectives on Gender in Africa.' In: Cornwall, Andrea (ed.). *Readings in Gender in Africa*. Bloomington, Indiananapolis. Indiana University Press. Oxford, James Currey, pp. 1-19.
- Donaldson Smith, Arthur. 1969 (1897). *Through Unknown African Countries. The First Expedition form Somaliland to Lake Lamu*. New York. Greenwood.
- Epplé, Susanne. 2006. 'Communicating self-esteem. Chances and choices in the life of widows in Bashada.' In: Strecker and Lydall (eds.). *The Perils of Face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia*. Berlin, Lit, pp. 339-370.
- Gabbert, Echi Christina with Ginno Ballo. 2006. 'Metamorphosis of a Karmet Song in Arbore.' In: Strecker and Lydall (eds.). *The Perils of Face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia*. Berlin, Lit, pp. 269-287.
- Girke, Felix. 2006. 'Respect and humiliation. Two 'First Contact' situations in southern Ethiopia. In: Strecker and Lydall (eds.). *The Perils of Face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia*. Berlin, Lit, pp. 109-149.
- Hodgson, Dorothy L. 2000. 'Introduction: Gender, Culture & the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist.' In: Hodgson, Dorothy (ed.). *Rethinking Pastoralism in Africa. Gender, Culture & the Myth of the Patriarchal Pastoralist*. Oxford: James Currey, pp.1-28
- Holtzman, Jon. 2002. 'Politics and Gastropolitics: Gender and the Power of Food in Two African Pastoralist Societies.' In: *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 8, pp 259-278.
- Kassam, Aneesa. 1986. 'The Fertile Past: The Gabra Concept of Oral Tradition.' In: *Africa* 56:193-209.
- Lydall Jean. 2000 'Having Fun with Ideophones: a socio-linguistic look at ideophones in Hamar, Southern Ethiopia.' In: Yiman, Baye, Alula Pankhurst (eds.). *Ethiopian Studies at the End of the Second Millenium, Proceedings of the XIV International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Volume 2. pp.886-911.
- Lydall, Jean. 2005. 'The Power of Women in an Ostensibly Male-Dominated Agro-Pastoral Society.' In: Widlok, Thomas and Wolde Gossa Tadesse (eds.). *Property and Equality. Vol.II. Encapsulation, Commercialisation, Discrimination*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp 152-172.
- Miyawaki, Yukio 1996. 'Maintaining Continuity in a Dualistic World: Symbolism of the Age Grade Succession Rituals among the Hoor (Arbore) of South Western Ethiopia.' In: *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies* 3-4, pp 39-65.

- Miyawaki, Yukio 1997. 'Ewe Lamb as a Feminine divinity, Male Kid as Naughty Wild Creature? Some Notes on the Symbolic Universe of the Hoor of South Western Ethiopia through the Examination of Sacrifice and Ritual Slaughter.' In: Fukui, Katsuyoshi, Eisei Kurimoto, Masayoshi Shigeta (eds.). Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies. Vol. 2, pp. 706-747.
- Miyawaki, Yukio. 2006. 'Hor Memory of Sidaama Conquest.' In: Strecker and Lydall (eds.). The Perils of Face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia. Berlin, Lit, pp.185-205.
- Pankhurst, Alula. 2006. 'A peace Ceremony at Arbore.' In: Strecker and Lydall (eds.). The Perils of Face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia. Berlin, Lit, pp.247-267.
- Sagawa, Toru. 2006. 'Wives' Domestic and Political Activities at Home: The Space of Coffee Drinking among the Daasanetch of Southwestern Ethiopia.' In: African Study Monographs, 27 (2), pp. 63-68.
- Scheff, Thomas J.. 2000 (1994). Bloody Revenge. Emotions, Nationalism and War. Lincoln, iUniverse.com, Inc.
- Schlee, Günther (ed.) 2002. Imagined Differences: Hatred and the Construction of Identity. Münster. Lit.
- Strecker, Ivo. 1979. The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia. Vol.III: Conversations in Dambaiti. Hohenschäftlarn: Klaus Renner Verlag.
- Strecker, Ivo. 1999. 'The Temptations of War and the Struggle for Peace among the Hamar of Southern Ethiopia.' In: Elwert, Georg, Stephan Feuchtwang, and Dieter Neubert (eds.). Sociologus Sonderband: Dynamics of Violence. Processes of Escalation and De-Escalation in Violent Group Conflicts. pp. 219-252.
- Strecker, Ivo and Alula Pankhurst. 2003. Bury the Spear! Film, Göttingen, IWF Wissen und Medien GmbH.
- Strecker, Ivo. 2006. 'Face' as a metaphor of respect and self-esteem. Lessons from Hamar. In: Strecker and Lydall (eds.). The Perils of Face. Essays on cultural contact, respect and self-esteem in southern Ethiopia. Berlin, Lit, pp. 83-103.
- Tadesse Wolde 1997. 'Cowrie Belts and Kalashnikovs.' In: Fukui, Katsuyoshi, Eisei Kurimoto, Masayoshi Shigeta (eds.), Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies. pp. 670-687.
- Tadesse Wolde 1999. Warfare and Fertility: A Study of the Hor (Arbore) of Southern Ethiopia. PhD Theses. Department of Anthropology. The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London.

Aynä ṭəla: the Shadow of the Eye. Healers and Traditional Medical Knowledge in Addis Ababa

Eliana Pili¹

Traditional health knowledge and practices play a fundamental role not only in the rural areas of Ethiopia, but also in the urban ones. Drawing on three ethnographic fieldworks carried out between 2002 and 2004, this paper attempts to investigate the activities of some traditional healers working in Addis Ababa. The study will focus on their training, their systems of classification of illness and misfortune and finally their therapeutic methods.

In the last few decades, particularly after the Alma-Ata declaration of WHO (1978), the efforts made by national governments, NGOs and international organizations for the promotion and the development of African traditional medicine have been paralleled by an intense debate, in the academic world, on the possible articulation between indigenous therapeutic systems and biomedicine. The growing interest towards traditional healing knowledge and practices concerned the Horn of Africa too. It must be said, however, that a large and relevant literature on Ethiopian medical traditions already existed at that time, thanks to the documentation collected by explorers, missionaries, naturalists and even colonial doctors.²

With few exceptions, the research carried out by anthropologists on Ethiopian traditional medicine from the late Seventies onwards focused on selected topics, such as famous possession cults like the *zar*, the specific relationship between art and medicine in Ethiopia³ or the activities of a particular category of healers⁴ (the *dābtāra*, see below). Almost all of these studies were based on fieldworks carried out in the rural areas of the country,⁵ where most of the population largely depended – and still depends – on traditional medicine for all health care needs. Apart from some recent works concerning Addis Ababa's healers,⁶ ethnographic investigation on indigenous healing in urban contexts has been almost totally neglected.

¹ University of Genoa, Department of Modern History (DISMEC), Ethnology Section, via Balbi 6, 16126 Genoa. E-mail: elianapili@yahoo.it

² Starting from the beginning of the XVII century – in concomitance with the arrival of the first Portuguese and Spanish Jesuits – missionaries, explorers, diplomats, doctors and adventurers travelled all over Ethiopia. Some of them took notes of the healing practices of the Ethiopian populations in their diaries and reports. Anyway Ethiopian traditional medical beliefs and practices became the subject of systematic analysis only from the beginning of the XX century thanks to renowned scholars – linguists and anthropologists – like Marcel Cohen, Marcel Griaule e Michel Leiris. During the period of Italian occupation (1936-1941) several naturalists and colonial doctors carried out research on these topics. See Pili (1999).

³ Concerning the therapeutic dimension of the *zar* possession cult in Ethiopia, see Young (1975a), Vecchiato (1993a) and Aspen (2001). Concerning the relationship between art and medicine in Ethiopia, see Mercier (1979a; 1997).

⁴ See Young (1975b; 1982), Mercier (1979b; 1988).

⁵ See Young (1975a; 1975b), Vecchiato (1993a), Aspen (2001), Mercier (1979b).

⁶ See Wondwosen (2000; 2002; 2004; 2005).

It's necessary to say that the situation of traditional medicine in Addis Ababa deserves autonomous analysis because of several specific factors: first of all the multiethnic and multi-religious milieu of the capital city, secondly its rapid demographic growth in the last decades⁷ and finally the large availability of western medical services and structures, that is incomparable with the situation in the rest of the country.⁸ Another consideration must be taken into account: in Addis Ababa the contradictory attitude of the socialist regime of the *Därg* (1974-1991) towards traditional medicine – strongly prejudicial in some respects - had extremely relevant consequences. As Makonnen Bishaw has clearly demonstrated (1991a: 199), the *Därg* showed particular harshness towards the activities of selected therapeutic categories. Unfortunately the anthropological literature has dedicated only few words to this topic, omitting references to a long history of arrests, intimidations, property confiscations many traditional practitioners were subject to between the second half of the Seventies and the end of the Eighties. One of the major implications of that repressive policy was a growing atmosphere of suspicion, ambiguity and diffidence, which started surrounding some healers during that period and has affected the world of traditional practitioners until today.

Within the literature which has been produced on Ethiopian therapeutic systems since the Seventies, a few efforts have been made by social science researchers in order to classify traditional healers according to fixed parameters: ethnic affiliations, specializations and domain of activity (magico-religious vs empirical).⁹ It must be argued that these classifications only partially help to understand the current situation of Addis Ababa's healers. In fact the capital town is a miscellaneous mosaic, extremely varied from a cultural, religious and ethnic point of view. Its population, largely made up of Amhara, includes significant percentages of Oromo, Gurage and Tigrayan; and with regard to religion, even if the Orthodox Christians are still the majority of the inhabitants, the Muslim community is much increasing.

For all these reasons in Addis Ababa it's easy to find healers whose training, methods and background are deeply different: Muslim sheiks, herbalists coming from all over the country, traditional bonesetters, orthodox clerics with wide therapeutic knowledge. But it would be a mistake, however, to presume that in Addis Ababa the therapeutic offer is limited to these healers. As a matter of fact the world of healing is much more complex and syncretistic and it's really hard to delineate a taxonomy that could be totally exhaustive.

One of the parameter largely adopted in medical anthropology to categorize traditional healers relates to their way of getting medical knowledge, i.e. through apprenticeship or through a sort of a special calling (sometimes defined "divine selection" or "initiation by spirits").

According to this categorization, which has been used also recently with reference to the situation of Addis Ababa's practitioners (Wondwosen: 2000), some healers receive clear signs of their future career during their childhood/adolescence through 1) repeated episodes of illness – at first almost incurable – 2) terrible accidents, 3) prodigious

⁷ Addis Ababa, which didn't reach the figure of 500,000 inhabitants in 1961 (Diamantini, Patassini 1993: 84), had a population of nearly 2.5 million in 1999 (Meheret 1999: 3).

⁸ In 2001 the following healthcare facilities were present in Addis Ababa: 17 hospitals, 21 government health centers, 222 private clinics, 13 clinics belonging to NGOs. See Ethiopian Health Information Service (2001: 13-29).

⁹ See Vecchiato (1993b) and Young (1970), cited also by Makonnen (1991b).

dreams in which supernatural beings (angels, spirits, ancestors, sometimes saints), little by little, reveal to them all the necessary medical knowledge. According to this classification other healers start their path towards the healing profession in a complete different way, by the means of a long period of training under their relatives, parents or other healers, who teach them all that is requested to recognize medicinal plants, prepare herbal remedies, and choose the most suitable techniques for the different cases. As a matter of fact this kind of classification is only partially satisfactory: it groups in the same categories healers whose competences and activities are extremely varied. Furthermore this typology seems to exclude the possibility that a “divine selection” could be followed by a long period of training, as often happens.

During my second and third fieldworks (summer 2003 and winter 2004), I was able to interview one of the most well-known healers of Addis Ababa, *hakim* Tekle Haile Gabriel,¹⁰ whose experience seems to be paradigmatic in this respect. When he was only a three year-old child, he started suffering from a sudden form of blindness. He was taken to different healers, to many (33)¹¹ *ṭəbäl* (holy water) to be cured, but he did not recover. During that period he frequently had dreams, through which he gradually learned “all the medicines that are necessary to cure people” (interview to *hakim* Tekle, February 28th 2004). These two inexplicable events – the painful sickness that persisted until he was an adolescent, and his prodigious dreams – are to be seen obviously as clear indicators of his professional vocation, but not as the only source of his medical knowledge. In fact, once he re-gained his sight, Ato Tekle deepened his knowledge through the old medical manuscripts belonging to his family.

It can be easily inferred that the initiation to the role of healer – be it a “divine selection”, a formal training or both of them - is only one of the different factors to be taken into account in order to elaborate a possible typology of healers. Another fundamental parameter to be considered is the type of curing techniques employed by the healers: they may range from the simple administration of herbal remedies or holy water (to be ingested or used for ablutions) to the manipulation of the body, but also to prayers and readings from the Holy Scriptures.

With respect to selected categories of healers, another crucial factor for the elaboration of a possible taxonomy, is their religious education. I refer especially to Muslim healers like the sheiks or Orthodox clerics like the *däbtära* (liturgy ministers) and *aṭmäqi* (baptisers-exorcists), whose main activities are sometimes coupled with different healing practices. Starting with a brief outline of the curing activities related to these clerics – the *däbtära* and the *aṭmäqi* –, I will try to delineate the major therapeutic roles which are currently present in Addis Ababa, underlining the intense dynamics of cultural transformations which are taking place in the world of healing.

In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church the *däbtära* is a liturgy minister and a musician, whose occupations may include also copying the sacred texts and working as a teacher in the parish school especially in rural areas. Many *däbtära* are also diviners and curers since they know complicated numerological techniques used to identify the causes of

¹⁰ *Hakim* Tekle, an elegant men in his late sixties', works with his son in the northern part of Addis Ababa. His clinic has a large waiting room, whose walls are all covered with photos relating to his long activity as a healer, articles on his work, diplomas of seminars and courses he attended. In 1994 an Ethiopian journalist wrote a biography of Ato Tekle (a 30 pages' typescript) which can be read in his ambulatory.

¹¹ The symbolic importance of numbers is evident: *hakim* Tekle fell ill when he was 3. The eye-disease continued – as he told me – for 9 (a multiple of 3) years. He started fasting when he was only 7. In order to recover he was taken to 33 different *ṭəbäl* (holy water).

problems and illnesses, and are acquainted with different therapeutic procedures that enable them to heal many diseases.

As the famous anthropologist Allan Young explained in one of his several works on Ethiopian traditional medicine (1975b: 249-252), the *dābtāra*'s training is a long and painful process, during which he moves continually from one region to another, from one master to another patron, without any economic support from his family, in order to broaden his religious, liturgical (and sometimes medical) knowledge. He can become an expert of *qəne* (religious poetry), of *zema* or *aqq^waq^wam* (respectively liturgical music and dance), or a specialist of *tərgum*, the exegesis of the Holy Scriptures. In the course of his prolonged apprenticeship, he may learn prayers and invocations used for the preparation of amulets, remedies for curing various diseases and so on. By copying the manuscripts of his teacher (*māmhər*), he may also expand his medical knowledge. According to Allan Young, some *dābtāra* focus their activities on the relationship with a category of feared spirits, the *ganen* (mainly identified as the demons of the evangelical tradition), while others escape from such a dreadful bond.¹²

Allan Young described the *dābtāra*'s activity as a sort of quasi-profession, based on his monopoly of medical knowledge. The recruitment to this semi-profession may be compared to “entering in a market [...] in which technical [i.e. therapeutic] knowledge is the dominant medium of exchange” (1975b: 264). The *dābtāra*'s monopoly is based on the fact that “his public stigmatises him as a man who lives through profaning what ordinary folk hold as sacred” (1975b: 245) and also entering a domain that is secret and terrifying. The fact that the *dābtāra* belong to the ecclesiastic hierarchy hasn't prevented the Ethiopian Orthodox Church from maintaining in the course of the time an attitude of suspicion and diffidence towards the extra-liturgical activities of these clerics, especially because of their familiarity with the invisible world.

The data collected during my fieldworks made me realize that if the *dābtāra* is considered a controversial figure in itself, today the stigma connected to him has gone much further. In the urban context of Addis Ababa few people recognize the variety of the competences of the *dābtāra*: on the contrary he is frequently described and assimilated to a sort of sorcerer, whose aims are only anti-social and destructive. His therapeutic role seems to have been – at least in the people's perception – seriously restricted. What are the causes of this process? It's hard to minimize the crucial role that politics played on this matter. But the current stereotype concerning the *dābtāra* can't be related only to these specific factors: in the declining medical role of the *dābtāra* in the urban context, it's necessary to recognize a larger process of cultural impoverishment, that fatally produces a depreciation of traditional practices, techniques and knowledge.

If in the past the power and the social status of the *dābtāra* was able to maintain by virtue of their rigid, monopolistic control over technical knowledge (its sources and its transmission), nowadays, paradoxically, that monopoly – the secret erected around that domain – is the factor that mainly jeopardizes the perpetuation of that system of knowledge.

It would be reductive and myopic, however, to see in the dynamics of cultural change affecting the *dābtāra*'s figure, only a symptom of the decline of the traditional therapies. In this process it's possible to detect a much more complex situation, in

¹² “*Debtera* [*dābtāra*] who have special powers can be either “demon pullers” (*ganel sabiy*), whose powers come from demon familiars and magic [...], or minor *debtera* (*tinish debtera*) whose powers come from magic only” (Young 1975b: 247).

which some therapeutic roles lose their centrality and their vigour, while others – more or less original – gain ground and shape in a different way the therapeutic landscape.

With regard to the other cleric mentioned above, the *aṭmäqi*, it could be considered debatable, at a first glance, to include him in a taxonomy concerning the Ethiopian healers. The *aṭmäqi*, in fact, is a priest, not specifically a healer, and his main activities are strictly connected with the use of the holy water: the term *aṭmäqi* derives from the verb *aṭämmäqä*, whose meaning is “to baptise”. With this verb we do not mean selectively the sacrament of baptism, through which a new born joins the Christian community; the word *aṭämmäqä* means more generally the employ of holy water for different purposes. The *aṭmäqi* usually sprinkles people who are suffering from some kind of disease or discomfort, those who want to get spiritual relief or are afraid to be victims of demons and malevolent spirits. Every day in Addis Ababa hundreds of people reach the numerous *ṭäbäl*¹³ located in the different parts of the city, in order to take the holy water and in many cases to meet the *aṭmäqi*. This phenomenon is massive and the silence of the anthropological literature on it is almost incomprehensible.

The healing session usually begins in the early morning, when people arrive at the *ṭäbäl* site: some people take a place in the yard around the building and pray on their own, others listen to sermons and the reading of the Holy Scriptures in or outside the *addaraś* (hall); sooner or later most of them queue up in front of the springs. There are queues for collecting the water into bottles or containers and others to get showers or ablutions. At *Kidane Məhrät* after the ablutions people go to the *aṭmäqi* in order to get a special blessing. The priest sprinkles the sufferers again or/and lays the cross on their heads. Sometimes this particular blessing simply marks the end of the healing session for that person, but in other cases this act produces specific reactions in the sufferer. She/he starts crying, trembling, moving violently etc. This behaviour is interpreted as the manifestation of a demon/spirit/supernatural being (*zar*, *buda*,¹⁴ *ganen*) who has attacked her/him in the past and is responsible of her/his discomfort or disease. When it happens, the *aṭmäqi* asks the invisible forces, of which there may be many, to reveal their identity and puts specific questions to them (*Who are you? How many are you? Why did you attack this person? How did you catch him/her? When?*). Then he orders them to leave, to abandon the sufferer, but frequently more healing sessions are necessary to achieve this result.

People go to the *ṭäbäl* for a large variety of diseases (skin problems, infertility, any form of disability),¹⁵ but also to find solutions to personal and social problems. Some of them have already been cured in private clinics or hospitals, or maybe by a traditional healer who suggested they should use the holy waters. Moreover many people go to the *ṭäbäl* only to pray and meditate, to find spiritual comfort and relief, especially during particular times of the year like Lent (*kudade*).

¹³ I will use the term *ṭäbäl* in its literal meaning, to refer to the holy water widely used in Ethiopia, but also to indicate the healing places where it's possible to find the *ṭäbäl* and join particular healing sessions. The most famous *ṭäbäl* in Addis Ababa are the ones of *Entoto* and *Kidane Məhrät*.

¹⁴ In Ethiopia the term *buda* (evil eye) is connected to craftsmen (weavers, tanners, blacksmiths). It's believed that at night *buda* people can transform themselves into hyenas and attack their victims in order to “eat” them, causing a progressive and lethal disease. *Buda* means also the power to produce the same effects through a malevolent and evil eye. The people endowed of particular beauty or special gifts are the most vulnerable to the attack of *buda*, who are influenced by a mysterious and uncontrollable instinct (Reminick, 1973: 34). Tubiana pointed out that *buda* “is a separate being, in liaison with the darkness, the black, filth, carrion – and who lives off the life of others” (1991: 25).

¹⁵ Nowadays *ṭäbäl* are largely used also in the cure of AIDS.

The fact that the *aṭmäqi* and the *däbtära* both belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church doesn't necessarily imply that their clients/patients are all Orthodox Christian. At the *täbäl*, it's not exceptional to find Muslims who are looking for a cure. Generally it can be argued that in the urban context of Addis Ababa, the religious affiliation of the healers seems to be of little importance to patients. The same consideration could be made to ethnic affiliation too. Even though I noticed that most of the sheiks' clients I met at their workplaces were Muslim and the majority of the people attending *täbäl* were Christian (their intense participation in prayers and sermons proved it), this was far from being a fixed rule.

Moreover it's evident that for some other categories of healers, their religious affiliation is completely irrelevant. I refer particularly to the so-called *wägešša* in amharic. This term is used in literature to indicate, in a broader sense, practitioners who are "familiar with various ethnomedical procedures, including cauterization, cupping, cutting, bonesetting, and herbalism" (Vecchiato 1993b: 164), and, strictly speaking, the bonesetter and/or the "indigenous surgeon". The anthropologist Allan Young, in his Ph.D. work on the healing practices of Begemder's Amhara, related the activities of the *wägešša* to three specific domains: the treatment of fractures and dislocations, the excision of the uvula and tonsils, and teeth extraction (1970: 33).

In Addis Ababa's context, the wide competences of the *wägešša* are restricted nowadays to the treatment of fractures (*səbbərat*) and sprains (*wälämta*). As a consequence, Addis Ababa's *wägešša* make use of techniques of body manipulation and empirical treatments, but seldom administer specific herbal remedies to their patients. According to some *wägešša* I was able to interview in Addis Ababa (Abera Jimma, Megzebe Kabe),¹⁶ before treating fractures which haven't been cured rapidly in the proper way, it's necessary to "soften" the bones with special techniques consisting of applying a specific vegetal product on the injured part of the body. With this technique the bone can be replaced in its correct position very easily. In order to protect the injured articulations and immobilize completely fractures, the *wägešša* uses simple cotton bands or larger cotton strips.

As traditional practitioners, the *wägešša* may be included in the larger and wide-ranging category of the so-called *bahlawi hakim*. Until few decades ago the term *hakim* – largely used in the Arab countries to indicate the local doctor – was used in Ethiopia mainly for western practitioners, doctors and paramedics. Today, besides this meaning, the expression *hakim*, often preceded by *bahlawi* (traditional, in amharic), is used to indicate healers: the majority of traditional practitioners in Addis Ababa call themselves, and are called by their patients, *hakim* or *bahlawi hakim*. In this effort to approach, at least terminologically, western medicine, it's not difficult to make out the desire and the need of the healers to claim an adequate recognition of their therapeutic role within Ethiopian society.

The curing practices of the so-called *bahlawi hakim* are extremely varied. The "title" of *bahlawi hakim* is in fact a sort of 'passe-partout word', often self-attributed, used by healers who have different training, origins, cultural and religious affiliations. Among those I met in Addis Ababa during my fieldworks, there were orthodox priests

¹⁶ Ato Abera Jimma is one of the most well-known *wägešša* of Addis Ababa. His workplace, that is located near a famous centre for the cure of tuberculosis, is crowded at any time of the day. Ato Megzebe Kabe, who works with his brothers in Addis Kätäma, belongs to a family of *wägešša*. He was trained by his father, Ato Kabe, who, in turn, was trained by his father Ato Fenkil.

(*märigeta*, i.e. liturgy experts), Muslim sheiks, but also practitioners who hadn't received any specific religious education related to their particular domain of healing. In any case, it would be a mistake to consider their medical beliefs and practices simply a heterogeneous combination of different therapeutic traditions. In fact such a miscellaneous system of knowledge refers to a compact and dense *corpus* of body theories and therapeutic models which is partially shared amongst the different categories of healers. This *corpus* of theories draws from an old medical tradition that over the centuries has deeply pervaded Ethiopian culture and also today affects the healing practices of many healers.

Drawing on my ethnographic fieldworks in Addis Ababa and the specific research conducted on the *bahlawi hakim*, in the following paragraphs I will try to concentrate my attention on some of their specific features: their training, the vocabulary they commonly use to indicate sickness (the words of illness) and finally their healing practices.

With few exceptions, the majority of the healers I was able to work with in Addis Ababa told me that they had been trained by relatives (grandparents, parents, uncles) who already worked as practitioners, not usually in Addis Ababa, but more often in the rural regions of the North. In particular, their biographies seemed to be all characterized by two recurring elements: 1) a long apprenticeship within the family and 2) repeated journeys made to broaden their medical knowledge. The Arab countries of the Near East (Saudi Arabia, Yemen), and also Sudan were described as the favoured destinations of Muslim healers, while the Orthodox practitioners told me about their long journeys through the Northern Highland of Ethiopia (Gojjam, Gondar) where famous monasteries and churches are located.

Apart from this distinction, the religious affiliation of the future healer is not so binding in this regard, as I have briefly anticipated before, and the biographic experience of one of the healers I met during my last fieldwork, *märigeta* Mariye Taye,¹⁷ is particularly meaningful in this respect. After the religious education he got in Wollo, Gondar and Gojjam, in order to become *märigeta*, Mariye served in one of the most renowned churches of Addis Ababa for more than thirty years. During that period, although working as a priest was his main activity, he started collecting medicinal plants in his spare time for a few Muslim healers, who practiced in the town. At the beginning of the Nineties, *märigeta* Mariye was seriously injured in a car accident. Due to his poor health, he couldn't continue his activities in the church¹⁸ and decided to work full-time with the Muslim healers he knew. In fact, while collaborating with them in the past, he had obtained a wide knowledge of their healing techniques. One year after the accident, he was able to treat his first patient. *Märigeta* Mariye's example shows how unjustified is in Ethiopia to separate rigidly medical traditions and/or body theories according to factors like religious or cultural affiliations. As an Orthodox priest, *märigeta* Mariye didn't find it eccentric to be trained by Muslim healers, to learn their traditional remedies and their cures.

In their daily practice, Addis Ababa's healers largely employ systems of illness classification and denomination which are similar to those used in the so-called *əṣṣā dābdabbe*, ancient medico-religious compilations of plant-derived remedies. In these

¹⁷ I met *Märigeta* Mariye in February 2004 in the house where he lives and works with his sister, who is also his assistant, in the part of the town known as Arada.

¹⁸ In the Ethiopian Orthodox Church "a priest must be physically whole and capable of standing unassisted during the mass" (Young 1975b: 250).

manuscripts an “anatomic” principle of classification, focused on the localization of the illness symptoms, was followed. According to this principle it was possible to distinguish among diseases concerning the head, the neck, the heart, the kidneys etc. and, as a consequence, also the remedies could be categorized like that. In Ethiopia, as in many parts of the world, this type of illness classification is widely used and many of the diseases treated by healers are indicated in this way, as it can be seen on the leaflets that most of the *hakim* use to publicize their activities. In Addis Ababa it’s not difficult to find boards indicating traditional medicine’s clinics along the roads and sometimes the list of the different illnesses which are cured are advertised on the boards too.

Alternatively many diseases are named after the symptoms they produce, not only after their localization. It’s the case of *yāmmiṭəl bāššəta* (epilepsy, in a biomedical terminology), that literary means “the illness of the person who is falling”. Sometimes the name of the illness refers to its supposed origin, its cause. For instance *yāmmiṭəl bāššəta* can also be known by another term, *yābariya bāššəta*, that literally means “the illness caused by *bariya*”. These, in the Ethiopian tradition, are dreadful evil demons.¹⁹ Similarly, *šārārit qusl*, literally “the wound [due to] the spider”, denotes a particular skin affection, commonly associated with the contact with spider’s urine, and identified sometimes with impetigo and sometimes with herpes. In the long lists of diseases cured by the healers the so-called *culture-bound syndromes*²⁰ (CBS) are not very frequent. The most recurrent one is an ailment called *aynā ṭəla*, which literally means “the shadow of the eye”. This expression refers to a condition – a sort of psychological affliction – that produces feelings of fear and anxiety, but at the same time can also denote the evil-eye, which could be considered the cause, the origin of those painful feelings. The strong relation with the evil-eye might suggest an association between *buda* and *aynā ṭəla*, but in effect there is no correlation between them.

On the contrary *aynā ṭəla* is linked to *ganen*: if you happen to find yourself accidentally under the gaze of these malevolent spirits, or even under their shadow, you’ll probably get ill. *Ganen*’s victims start to suffer loneliness, anxiety, pain, have thrilling visions and nightmares, and what’s more, lose completely their will-power. He/she continues to feel emotions, desires and wants, but can’t express them, is unable to translate his/her intentions into actions. But according to some healers I interviewed, *aynā ṭəla* is something different and has other meanings. It can be described as a kind of extreme shyness, typical of children, or even as a desperate way of refusing a disappointing reality. In the latter case, it results in a sort of auto-reclusion in an oneiric world where the delusions and the defeats of everyday life are finally made up for.

The contact with *ganen* is related also to another Ethiopian *culture-bound syndrome*: the *ləkəft*. This term generally refers to food or drinks left uncovered at night and for this reason contaminated by *ganen* spirits, but it also points out the symptoms that an imprudent consumption of those food and drinks produces: intestinal problems, tachycardia and sense of suffocation.

Moreover the references to a biomedical terminology are not rare within the illness vocabulary used by Addis Ababa’s healers: loan words are used for very common

¹⁹ *Bariya* in amharic literally means “slave”. It may also refer to people who are subjected to demons or to the malevolent spirits causing epilepsy (Strelcyn 1955: XXI).

²⁰ In the last years the concept of *culture-bound syndrome* has been partially deconstructed both from the theoretical perspective and from the point of view of the clinical practice. In this paper I refer to it in the sense proposed by Cassidy (1982: 326).

diseases and simply transliterated from English into Amharic, without any other modifications (i.e. amoeba, infections, cancer, trakoma, jardia).

The analysis of the meanings and the uses of the “words of illness” employed by Ethiopian *bahlawi hakim*, leads us to consider their nosological system as the result of a deep syncretistic process, through which forms of suffering that involve local beliefs (*ləkəft* and *aynä ṭəla*, for instance²¹) juxtapose to terms referring to biomedical pathologies, like amoeba and trakoma. In this open system, odd combinations are produced. Some healers largely use the terms haemorrhoid (in English) even while referring to the larger indigenous category of *kintarot*, which actually comprises a wider variety of medical problems, including toe-warts, for instance.

If the incidence of biomedical terms in the healers’ illness classifications is significant but somehow limited, the appropriation of techniques, styles and devices taken from conventional medicine is much more relevant in other aspects of their activities. This progressive trend can be easily noted in many healing centres, that look like modern clinics in many respects, since they often display examination couches, screenings and show-cases full of jars and bottles of medicinal products and, last but not least, big posters of human anatomy. At another level, this trend is evident in the familiarity some healers (*wägešša*) have with clinical exams (i.e. radiographies), which some of their patients do in hospitals/private clinics before consulting them. The incorporation of biomedical elements into their practice is also evident in the diffusing habit of keeping registers of patients, a sort of case-histories’ archive, with information like their names, their addresses, the dates of their visits, the diagnoses and even the sums of money they paid.

The adoption of biomedical features by Addis Ababa’s *hakim* can also be considered an effort, and at the same time an exigency, to give a more “modern” image of themselves and of their work, an image that meets their clients expectations (McMillen 2004: 892).

All the *bahlawi hakim* I worked with used plant-derived remedies as their main healing method. Nevertheless it would be reductive to consider them simply as herbalists. Their competences are different from the ones of the practitioners who cure with herbal remedies in the rural areas of the country. Allan Young tried to describe the different skills and practices of the rural herbalists, classifying those located in the Begemder area into a six categories’ taxonomy, according to several factors, like their competences, knowledge, diagnostic methods and specialization (1970: 54-67). This type of classification can’t be transferred into the metropolitan context of Addis Ababa. Unlike their colleagues living in the countryside, who are in some way “specialized” in the treatment of a limited number of afflictions,²² the *bahlawi hakim* claim to cure several diseases and are also familiar with other therapeutic practices. These often include *ṣālot* (prayers), *dəgəmt* (magical texts and formulas) or the administration of *ṭəbāl*. The holy water is sometimes taken from sacred sources, but it can also be ordinary water on which the healer has recited specific prayers or dissolved herbal medicines. This water can be drunk or used for ablutions.

²¹ *Məčč* can be considered another popular *culture-bound syndrome* in Ethiopia. According to Edith Lord “any disease with a sudden onset, commonly with high fever, headache, vomiting, nausea, sweating, chilling, and sometimes abdominal discomfort is known as *mitch* [*məčč*]. *Mitch* is believed to be caused by going out into the bright sun at noon without first washing hands and mouth after taking a meal” (1970: 193).

²² “An herbalist is known to his public by his ability to treat specific named ailments. Most herbalists offer therapies against no more than three or four sicknesses” (Young 1982: 25).

My ethnographic fieldworks in Addis Ababa has revealed to me a complex therapeutic landscape that is significantly marked by relevant dynamics of cultural transformation, but also by strong contradictions. In this context therapeutic roles like the *dābtära*'s, have been partially changing and losing some of their prerogatives, while emerging roles, like the *bahlawi hakim*'s have been gaining considerable ground.

At the moment in Ethiopia organic rules regarding the official recognition of healer's activities, their organization in associations,²³ the issues of patents and licences concerning their work, haven't been yet approved. There is no regulation concerning their intellectual property rights and the protection of their knowledge in case they collaborate with research institutes which study the properties of herbal medicines. With the exception of the traditional birth attendants (TBAs), who have been involved in healthcare programmes for decades throughout Ethiopia – as in large parts of the African continent – no other traditional practitioners' category has been officially employed within the national healthcare system. For the moment the assurance of a rapid legalization of traditional healers,²⁴ or the intention of including traditional medicine in the curricula of Ethiopian medical students,²⁵ widely reported by media, has had no consequence.

In order to permit a true recognition of traditional medicine's *status* in Ethiopia, two different factors should be considered, in my opinion: on one hand, a critical reflection on the risks concerning the tendency to reduce traditional medicine only to the empirical-herbalistic domain – and, as a consequence, to promote research only in this field – and, on the other hand, the urgency to fully acknowledge the crucial role played by traditional healers not only in the rural areas of the country, but also in the urban ones.

Acknowledgements

During my fieldworks I counted on the help of many people to whom I am particularly grateful: Ato Kelbessa Urga of *Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute* and Ato Tesfaye Awas of *Institute of Biodiversity Conservation and Research*, who put me into contact with the National Association of Traditional Healers (ETMPA). I am immensely grateful to Samuel Awaju and Haimanot Menghistu and to all the healers I have worked with in Addis Ababa: this work depends on their patience and their help.

²³ The Ethiopian Traditional Medicine Practitioners' Association (ETMPA) is the national healers' organization, founded in Addis Ababa in 1991. Today it counts 2,000 members. A former association of Ethiopian traditional healers was established in 1959-1960 (1952 of the Ethiopian Calendar, E.C.), but it dissolved because of internal factionalism; a second one, established in 1979-1980 (1972 E.C.) had short life too: after repeated episodes of corruption and tensions with the Ministry of Health and the Ethiopian Government, in 1985-1986 (1978 E.C.) eleven members of the association were arrested on a charge of supplying men and means to the *Tigrean People Liberation Front* and *Eritrean People Liberation Front* (Biniam 1998: 37).

²⁴ "Ministry preparing to certify traditional healers", *Ethiopian Herald*, 10/23/2001.

²⁵ "The inclusion of traditional medicines into medical curricula requested", *Addis Zemen*, 07/31/2001.

References

- Aspen, Harald. 2001. *Amhara Traditions of Knowledge: Spirit Mediums and their Clients*. Aethiopistische Forschungen 58. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Biniam Woldegebriel. 1998. *Traditional Medicine Practitioners of Addis Ababa: a Historical Account from Imperial Times to the Present*. B.A. thesis in History, Addis Ababa University.
- Cassidy, C.M. 1982. 'Protein-energy malnutrition as a culture-bound syndrome.' *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry*, Vol. 6, pp. 325-345.
- Diamantini, C., Patassini, D. 1993. *Addis Abeba: villaggio e capitale di un continente*. Milano: Franco Angeli.
- Ethiopian Health Information Service. 2001. *Addis Ababa Directory, 2001 Edition*. Addis Ababa.
- Lord, Edith. 1970. 'Medicine and Science in Ethiopia.' In: *Queen of Shaba's heirs. Cultural patterns of Ethiopia*, Washington D.C.: Acropolis Books, pp. 187-219.
- Makonnen Bishaw. 1991a. 'Promoting Traditional Medicine in Ethiopia and Eritrea. A Brief Historical Review of Government Policy.' *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 33 (2), pp. 193-200.
- 1991b. 'The Role and Status of Women in Traditional Health Care Services in Ethiopia.' In: Tsehay Berhane-Selassie (ed.), *Gender Issues in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, pp. 55-65.
- McMillen, Heather. 2004. 'The adapting healer: pioneering through shifting epidemiological and sociocultural landscapes.' *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 59, pp. 889-902.
- Meheret Ayenew. 1999. *The City of Addis Ababa: Policy Options for the Governance and Management of a City with Multiple Identity*. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Mercier, Jacques. 1979a. *Les rouleaux magiques éthiopiens*. Paris : Seuil.
- 1997. *Art that heals: the image as medicine in Ethiopia*. Munich: Prestel.
- 1979b. 'Approche de la médecine des debteras.' *Abbay Cahier*, Vol. 10, pp. 111-127.
- 1988. *Asrès, le magicien éthiopien*. Paris: Lattès.
- Pili, Eliana. 1999. *Presenze italiane in Africa Orientale: i medici coloniali*. Tesi di laurea, Università degli Studi di Genova.
- Reminick, Ronald A. 1975. 'The Structure and Functions of Religious Belief among the Amhara of Ethiopia.' In: *Proceedings of the First United States Conference on Ethiopian Studies*, East Lansing: African Studies Center, pp. 25-42.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 1992. 'The Musician and the Transmission of Religious Tradition: the Multiple Roles of the Ethiopian *Dābtāra*.' *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. XXII(3), pp. 242-260.
- Strelcyn, Stefan. 1955. *Prières magiques éthiopiennes pour délier les charmes (mäftehē seray)*. Warsaw: Panstwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe.
- Tubiana, Joseph. 1991. 'Zar and Buda in Northern Ethiopia.' In: Lewis, I.M., Al Safi, A., Hurreiz S.(eds), *Women's medicine: the Zar-Bori Cult in Africa and beyond*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 19-33.
- Vecchiato, Norbert L. 1993a. 'Illness, Therapy and Change in Ethiopian Possession Cults.' *Africa (London)*, Vol. 63(2), pp. 176-196.
- 1993b. 'Traditional Medicine.' In: Kloos, H., Zein, E.Z.(eds.), *The Ecology of Health and Disease in Ethiopia*. Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 157-178.

- Wondwosen Teshome-Bahiru. 2000. 'Initiation of Healers in Ethiopia: a Case Study.' *Collegium Anthropologicum*, Vol. 24, pp. 555-563.
- 2002. 'Indigenous Healers of Ethiopia: Victims of a Healing Profession.' *The African Anthropologist*, Vol. 9(2), pp. 102-116.
- 2004. 'Concept of Health, Disease, Illness and Therapy among the People of Addis Ababa.' *Annals of African Medicine*, Vol. 3(1), pp. 28-31.
- 2005. 'Impacts of Urbanization on the Traditional Medicine of Ethiopia.' *Anthropologist*, vol. 8(1), pp. 43-52.
- Young, Allan. 1970. *Medical Beliefs and Practices of Begemder Amhara*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
- 1975a. 'Why Amhara get kureynya: sickness and possession in an Ethiopian Zar Cult.' *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 2(3), pp. 567-584.
- 1975b. 'Magic as a Quasi-Profession: the Organization of Magic and Healing among the Amhara.' *Ethnology*, Vol. 14(2), pp. 245-265.
- 1982. 'The Amhara Medical System'. In: Yoder, P.(ed.), *African Health and Healing Systems. Proceedings of a Symposium*. Los Angeles: Crossroads Press, pp. 21-41.

The Gumuz: Are They Shifting Cultivators?

Berihun M. Mekonnen¹

Shifting cultivation is one of the less explored subjects in anthropology. The existing literature has serious limitations in providing a broader picture of the dynamics of the system. Shifting cultivation is variably addressed as part or form of hunting/ gathering, pastoralism or as combinations of these systems. Such (mis)representation has contributed for continued confusion and misunderstanding. Some of the theoretical tools that attempted to establish shared common features among shifting cultivators exclude people like the Gumuz due to paucity of data on the diversity and dynamics of the system. This paper compares and tests these general criteria with empirical ethnographic data from the Gumuz.

Introduction

Shifting cultivation² as an economic system is known with different names and terms. Among others hoe cultivation, horticulture, swidden agriculture/cultivation (an old European term), slash-and burn, crop rotation and crop fallow are used in one way or another to refer to the practice of shifting cultivation. The term horticulture is used to denote the transition between forager societies and those of agrarian societies. Shifting cultivation, on the other hand, is described as a form of agriculture in which farm plots are shifted regularly to allow soil fertility to recover. The practice mainly depends on the periodic shifting of farm plots in favour of new and fertile ones (Berihun 2004; Boserup 1970).

Many shifting cultivators practice slash-and-burn the trees and bushes in the new fields as part of their farming cycle. But some clear the land without burning, and some still migrate to new areas without employing cyclical method on a given plot. Thus the concept of slash-and- burn only explains one aspect of the practice. The same is true for the “crop rotation” and “crop fallow” terms, which shows the differences in perspectives and emphasis among researchers. This multiplicity of terms, to a certain extent, is a source of confusion and indicates some sort of lack of clarity when it comes to our understanding of shifting cultivation as a system. In fact in attempting to define horticulture Johnson noted that “‘horticulturalist’ is one of those categories, common enough in our field, whose meaning seems clear until we attempt to define its boundaries exactly – that is, provide rules for deciding who is a horticulturalist and who is not” (Johnson 1989:50). Johnson further states that horticulture covers a large and diverse array of economic and social systems.

¹ Independent scholar, USA [berihunie@yahoo.com]

² The practice of shifting cultivation is known by different terminologies. Some of these designations refer to one or other dimensions (aspects) of the activity, such as the tools used (as in hoe cultivation), the periodic shifting of plots (as shifting cultivation) and slash and burn to indicate the cutting and burning of trees in preparing new plots. These terms are used interchangeably. Shifting cultivation seems more widely used although the other terms are also fairly common. For the purpose of this paper, however, I will use mainly the term shifting cultivation and hoe cultivation.

This paper is, therefore, aimed at outlining some of the effects of the confusion in categorizing a certain socio-cultural group as shifting cultivators in some of the literature and non-shifting cultivators in others. It also challenges the commonly shared features of shifting cultivators which are used to compare and contrast with other form of economic practices. I will attempt to show the limitations of such generalization in a context of ethnographic data drawn from the Gumuz of northwest Ethiopia. I argue that groups such as the Gumuz have been labelled by some authors as pastoralists and hunters/gatherers due to this limited understanding and lack of clarity on shifting cultivation. Despite the claims of establishing shared common features of shifting cultivators, there is a visible paucity of information on shifting cultivation even compared to the literature on hunter/gatherers (foragers) and pastoralists. I return to this general point shortly. First I will briefly discuss the ethnographic account of the Gumuz.

The Gumuz

The Gumuz are one of the peoples of northwest Ethiopia inhabiting the extended north-western lowlands stretched from Gondär in the north to Wälläga in the south. Currently, the Gumuz are mainly incorporated in the Benišangul-Gumuz Regional State of which the Gumuz predominantly live in two of the three zonal administrative divisions namely, Mätäkäl and Kāmaši (the third being Assosa), and two special *wärādas* (i.e. Pawe and Mao-Komo). The Gumuz language (*Ingəša-bəga*) belongs to the Nilo-Saharan language family. Most of the data used in this discussion is collected among the Gumuz of Mätäkäl at various times, mainly during my dissertation fieldwork conducted at various times in 1999, 2000 and 2002.³ About 55-60% (66,532) of the Gumuz live in the five *wärādas* of Mätäkäl.

The Gumuz of Mätäkäl are socially organized on the basis of two main factors; clan and territory. In terms of kinship the Gumuz are organized in different clans and sub-clans that consist of people who claim patrilineal descent relations. They practice exogamous and polygamous exchange marriage and residence for newly married couples is mostly patrilocal. Generally intra-clan relations involve a limited area of claims and co-operation. The practical restrictions and obligations that a clan member has to his fellow men are mainly related to marriage. A person is not allowed to marry an individual who has a claim to the same clan ancestor as one's own (Berihun 2004).

The most important economic endeavour in Gumuz is shifting cultivation, locally known as *mālaya*. The word *mālaya* is also used to mean “work” which implies that work and agriculture are synonymous. Agricultural activities are mainly based on human labour and the use of the hoe. In the process of the hoe cultivation they periodically rotate agricultural plots. Plots that are cultivated for some, usually three to four years, will be left fallow for six to ten years. Every year they clear and use new plots and leave fallow old ones for a certain period of time (Berihun 2004).

Each year a Gumuz family clears new forest land, *kanča* land, to produce millet, while some of the previous plots are still in use. The Gumuz family has different types of plots that are in use for harvesting a variety of crops in a single agricultural calendar. The Gumuz identify two main plot types, i.e. *kanča* and *bəkuna* land. *Kanča* plots are, as mentioned above, the freshly cleared lands used to grow finger millet as the main crop type in the intercropping farming practice. In the second year *kanča* plots are called *jitank'a* and are sown with sorghum as the main crop. The varieties of seeds that will be intercropped in *jitank'a* plots are fewer than in *kanča* plots. The third year a

³ See Berihun (2004).

kanča plot is turned to *bəkuna* but it is at the same time a sorghum field and sometimes called *jikuanč'a*. This second sorghum harvest, however, is not a result of new hoeing and sowing. It rather is a ratoon cropping that arises from the regenerating sorghum roots from the harvest of the previous year. After the third year a plot is left fallow for a period of six to ten years, which presently tends to be reduced to four to six years due to an increasing land shortage. There are several factors for a growing land shortage among the Gumuz, of which settlement of non-Gumuz highlanders to the region is one major reason (Berihun 2004). I discuss more on the ethnographic accounts further below as part of my argument whether the Gumuz have been understood as shifting cultivators or otherwise.

The Gumuz: Shifting Cultivators or Hunter-gatherers/ Pastoralists?

The Gumuz can be taken as good ethnographic evidence for how we misunderstood shifting cultivation and how little information is available on such socio-cultural groups in general.⁴ Some authors label the Gumuz as pastoralists; others refer to them as “nomadic hunter/cultivators”. Olson (1996) is one among those who define the Gumuz as pastoralists. Under the entry of the term “Gumuz”, Olson states that the Gumuz are an ethnic group living in the Sudan and far western Ethiopia. They speak a Nilotic language and make their living as *semi-nomadic pastoralists, raising cattle, and as plough agriculturalists*. As a dictionary definition, we may not expect detailed information but there is no hint about the Gumuz being shifting cultivators. In fact they are described by economic activities they practice least. The Gumuz, or for that matter most of the shifting cultivators, are not known for their stock raising. Animal husbandry and poultry are important activities that complement the hoe cultivation but are not the main economic activities.

As I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Berihun 2004), in Gumuz the purpose and use of the small cattle and goat stocks are different from what is common among the pastoralists and neighbouring highlanders. First, since the Gumuz are hoe cultivators and not plough farmers, cattle (particularly oxen) are not relevant for farming as it is for the neighbouring ethnic groups. Second, the Gumuz are not accustomed to the use of milk and milk products as part of their diet, while it is part of the staple diet among pastoralists. The Gumuz raise cattle and goats as a source of meat and for the main purpose of ritual offering such as sacrificing animals at death rituals (*kemāša*) and other similar human and spiritual-godly relations (Berihun 2004:117).

Hoe cultivation is the main occupation and source of subsistence in Gumuz. Other economic activities, including hunting and gathering, limited animal husbandry, beekeeping, keeping poultry and small scale fishing are supplementary. Contrary to this, a UNDP/RRC report identified the Gumuz as “hunter/cultivators”. It is hard to explain what “hunter/cultivator” represents as a combined concept as such. The terminology

⁴ Boserup noted that there are many “tribal communities” in Africa who practice shifting cultivation as a main form of economic subsistence. Grigg noted that agriculture the main characteristics of shifting cultivation “is found in parts of America, Asia and Africa[...] and for the most part is confined to the tropical areas within these continents. In 1957 it was estimated that 200 000 000 people depend upon shifting cultivation and that they occupied- including cropland and fallow- 33 000 000 km², an area more than twice the world’s cropland” (Grigg 1974:60). Warner also stated that estimates of the actual number of shifting cultivators vary from 250 million to 300 million (1991:9). There are no much written resources on shifting cultivation compared to what we have on hunter/gatherers, pastoralists and peasants. One reason for such less emphasis could be the mixing of the definition of shifting cultivators with hunter/gatherers and pastoralists.

itself hints some confusion and uncertainty on the part of the authors. Hunting and gathering in the current context of the Gumuz of Mātākāl are peripheral undertakings, a subsidiary to the hoe cultivation. Thus emphasizing these peripheral activities to the extent of labelling the Gumuz “hunter-cultivators” as the report by UNDP/RRC research team does is more of a hasty and unfounded conclusion. Hunting is in most cases an activity of individuals on their way to and from agricultural work. During the day people may hunt small games when they have short breaks from the farming job while at other times hunting remains an “off-work” undertaking. This is mainly related to the Gumuz’s perception and interpretation of hunting that goes beyond its economic relevance. It is rather a ritual endeavour. As a result many of the game animals are not consumed by all members of the household and are connected with many taboos and restrictions (Berihun 2004:115). The “hunter/cultivator” labelling, hence, is an additional evidence for the paucity of information on shifting cultivation.

How can one establish a shared common feature of shifting cultivators under such limited (if not confused) information? How far can such generalizations explain the reality? What will be its heuristic significance? I will discuss these and related issues taking Johnson’s “features most widely shared by contemporary horticultural peoples around the world” (1989:50). Johnson has listed the common features of horticulturalists and compared and contrasted them with foragers and peasants. My aim here is to see how far these features match with the ethnographic data from the Gumuz.

Johnson listed eight main common features of horticulturalists, two of which (production for subsistence and distribution throughout the humid tropics) are so common that they encompass many of the people engaged in other forms of economies as subsistence producers. I choose the most challenging ones that match the Gumuz ethnographic data. These include dependence on slash and burn or shifting cultivation of root crops for the vast bulk of food energy in the diet; provision of labour and technology by the nuclear or extended family of the producer; control of land by multifamily corporate kin groups; settlement in villages or in well-defined clan territories, with population of several hundred members; and political leaders of either headman or the Big Man varieties, with important roles in production, exchange, and resource allocation (Johnson 1989:50). When we measure the Gumuz practice of shifting cultivation against the listed features an unbridgeable gap appears.

Although slash and burn is a common practice, cultivation of root crops is not part of the main crop production in Gumuz. As discussed in Berihun (2004:114) finger millet and sorghum constitute the main agricultural products. Each of the crops has twelve and fourteen varieties respectively. The word *tank’a* (finger millet) is connotatively used to mean “grain” or “cereal”. Millet is sown in a newly cleared plot of land (*kanča* land). Such newly farmed millet plots are known in Gumuz as *čəčəmitasa*. Sowing a single crop is uncommon. Intercropping, i.e. sowing different crops in a single plot is the usual way of farming. During my fieldwork in 2000, I observed a new farm, which was sown with different seeds of crops, including finger millet, sorghum, *əndəha*,⁵ rapeseed, *jampa* (a variety of sorghum which has sweet sap similar to sugar cane) and sesame grain. A bean-like and creeping crop called *oppa* is also planted at the bottom of

⁵ *əndəha* is a crop that has pepper-like fruits and is used as a sauce or a component to prepare a sauce. It has a jelly-like substance. One can use *əndəha* fresh or dried and powdered to make the sauce. In Gumuz, it is also eaten raw. *əndəha* is also called *wayka* and is used by some highlanders to reduce the hotness of pepper in a sauce.

selected and castrated⁶ trees for such purpose in new farm fields. Although such intercropping is a common practice, the plot is referred to as millet plot (*mitasa*). Apart from the above crop types, the Gumuz also produce maize, *noug*, pumpkin, haricot bean, cotton, ginger, banana and pepper. This feature will leave the Gumuz out of the category of shifting cultivation or it remains as a challenge for the shared common feature.

In terms of the provision of labour and technology, the nuclear or the extended family is not the only one in Gumuz. The Gumuz have an elaborate and different form of labour organization which includes all or part of a lineage group. The call for a group work depends on the preparation of *kemälaya* (beer prepared for work). *Kemälaya* refers to the provision of drinks during the work in the field and in the evening back at the village. Most of the time independent family households prepare *kemälaya* turn by turn, while new couples may not have their own farm that needs a big work force for a year or two. Thus the Gumuz have *kemälaya* that refers to the group labour organization formed in a village, a group that has a relative permanency and reciprocates labour among its members. A usual *kemälaya* workgroup constitutes lineage members who live close to each other. On average a workgroup has about 10 to 12 members who participate in daily reciprocating labour force. The reciprocation of labour, however, may not be one to one since the return of labour depends largely on the host's ability and resources to prepare *käya* for the *kemälaya*. Here it is important to note that *kemälaya* workgroups are not exclusively based on lineage membership. Persons who have affinal relations and live in villages of in-laws can also be part of *kemälaya* workgroups in a village (Berihun 2004:120). There are also other ad hoc forms of *kemälaya* workgroups which are called *kemahäda* and *kemambäriya*, both of which are organized for specific tasks and mobilized when required. *Kemahäda* is organized for a specific task and on occasional basis during the harvesting and weeding seasons. Apart from its ad hoc nature, a *kemahäda* workgroup is usually composed of people who are both paternal and maternal relatives. Reciprocation is not anticipated in *kemahäda* labour since the participants are basically helping a relative who is in a critical situation (Berihun 2004:122). *Kemambäriya* is a form of mobilizing a bigger workforce and brings together people from different villages and clans. This type of labour organization consists mainly of people of the same sex on the basis of friendship regardless of clan affiliation and residence. The number of *kemambäriya* members varies considerably, but in most cases *kemambäriya* groups consist of more people than the village *kemälaya* workgroup. According to my informants the smaller *kemambäriya* workgroup can have 16 to 20 members of same sex, while a larger group could be between 25 to 30 members. Such a group has the ability to finish an individual's farm plot within a day. In fact it is considered as the strongest workforce that one can organize for the purpose of agricultural activities (Berihun 2004:123). Thus labour organization in Gumuz is not limited to the nuclear and extended family members and this makes it another challenge for the assumption of shared common features.

When it comes to control of land by multifamily corporate kin groups, this assertion is based on a common view that clans own land and control the distribution and use of land and related resources. This was an undisputed assumption among several authors on the Gumuz too. Actually this argument takes the assumption of clans as territorial

⁶ The clearing of farmlands is made leaving some selected tall and straight trees all over the field. These trees will be burnt at the bottom so that they die but stand to be used as a support for the creeping crops. I used the term castration to express this practice of killing a tree.

groups as its point of departure, which is a common misconception. This clan based collective ownership argument is more an ideal model and conceals much of the complex nature of Gumuz socio-economic dynamics and the role of the individual in making important decisions. Thus in the context of the Gumuz, there are no clear territories of clan owned lands, forests, and woodland and hunting and gathering grounds as such. In fact clan relations are more visible and important at village levels than at wider territorial groupings. This is because clan locations and residences are not confined to single territories. It is not uncommon to find members of the same clan (or sub-clan) inhabiting different and territorially discontinuous locations (Berihun 2004: 80, 129-30). As a result taking this as a common feature leaves out the Gumuz from among the shifting cultivators.

Another common element assumed to exist among horticulturalists is political leaders of either the headman or the Big Man varieties, with important roles in production, exchange, and resource allocation. It is difficult to agree that there are individuals in Gumuz who assume either the headman or Big Man status. There are, however, individuals who assume leadership positions for different socio-cultural and religious practices such as religious rituals, group conflict arbitration and similar matters. In Gumuz the lineage dominates most of the relations. Many individual actions and deeds are implicated and interpreted in terms of lineage relations. This perception has much practical significance in relation to conflicts and feuds between various levels of lineage segmentations encompassing interethnic conflicts (Berihun 2004:178). Conflicts are arbitrated and resolved through elders (*obtəsbəga*⁷) (Berihun 2004:242). Thus in Gumuz lineage (group) decisions and arbitration through the elders play important roles as opposed to the headman type of leadership, which is an additional factor for the lack of inclusiveness in our shared common features.

Johnson himself is well aware of such possible limitations in establishing the shared common features and noted that when one attempts to categorize who shifting cultivator and who is not, it is “apparent that the boundaries are fuzzy and littered with variants” (Johnson 1989:50). Boserup also discussed shifting cultivation. She acknowledged in the preface of her book that “Many of the conclusions drawn in the book [concerning shifting cultivators] are necessarily tentative and provisional, and some aspects of the problem had to be omitted for lack of basic information” (Boserup 1970:5). Boserup also discussed the issue of gender among African shifting cultivators and stated that “Africa is the region of female farming *par excellence*. In many African tribes, nearly all the tasks connected with food production continue to be left to women. In most of these tribal communities, the agricultural system is that of shifting cultivation...” (Boserup 1970:16). Boserup’s discussion has ample room for disagreement and her positions are open for challenge when tested with empirical data from people such as the Gumuz. I will only make brief remarks on her views on gender relations among shifting cultivators due to the limited space available here.

Boserup argued, “...in very sparsely populated regions where shifting cultivation is used, men do little farm work, the women doing most. In somewhat more densely populated regions, where the agricultural system is that of extensive plough cultivation, women do little farm work and men do much more. ...” (Boserup 1970:35). Briefly put,

⁷ The concept of “*obtəsbəga*” is different from the concept of old, *ganza*, which is not used in the context of the former. However, the compound word “*duganz*”, literally son of an old person, has a connotation of respectfulness and is used to address persons. For instance, a person may call an individual whose name he does not know *duganz*.

agricultural activities in Gumuz are an occupation of both men and women. Although the division of labour seems to follow gender differences, as it applies to most other activities, there is no major gendered differentiation in terms of participation. One occasion in which gender differences become important is related to clearing of big trees in acquiring new plots (*kančas*), which is men's work. On the other hand transporting the produce from the threshing field to grain stores is in most cases done by women. These can be considered as spheres of gendered participation in the process of the agricultural practices. The gender issue is much more relevant when it comes to labour organization. As discussed above, all major agricultural activities are undertaken in the form of reciprocating communal labour, i.e. *kemālayas*. The organization of *kemālaya* groups is entirely dependent on the availability of women and their organizing ability in the household. In fact looking at the current farming practice of the Gumuz, one can conclude that absence of women in a household is tantamount to non-existence of agricultural work at all (Berihun 2004: 135).

Boserup further stated that dominant female farming pattern is "found in regions of shifting agriculture where plough is not used" (Boserup 1970:24). This position has several drawbacks. First and foremost shifting cultivators in Africa are not isolated from other forms of agriculture, namely plough cultivation. The Gumuz, for instance, have lived for centuries with people who have been practicing plough cultivation. Boserup pictured the men in African shifting cultivators as "lazy", "exploitive of female and child labour" and "highly rational", calculating every step of the way of their advantages at the expense of their wives and children. In fact she argued that "the work burden carried by women, however, is large, since women also had to perform domestic duties. Since this double work burden is an obligation rooted in the traditional marriage system, which gives men command over female labour, *it could perhaps be said that the large share of the added work input in agriculture was obtained by means of the stick, and not the carrot*" (Boserup 1981:148; emphasis mine). This statement is close to comparing slave with female labour where men are forcing their women (wives) to serve them. With all the hardships and difficult tasks women are engaged in these societies, they deserve much better assumptions than reducing them to mere forced labourers.

Women are not passive participants and do not just simply follow orders. They are part and parcel and pillar of the family to the extent that their absence means non-existence or formation of the family itself. Such is the case in Gumuz labour organization. In Gumuz, individual labour (both male and female) is not well recognized as independent before marriage. Lineage members (both male and female) have no significant individual holdings of land. This does not mean that they have no right to have one. Rather they have not yet assumed independence from their natal family and remain dependent until they get married. Thus they work for the family and their labour will not be reciprocated since they are perceived as subordinate to their natal family. In addition, an unmarried individual (male or female) cannot have an independent *kemālaya* (beer for organizing communal labour), which is the basis of private property. For unmarried individuals this is simply impossible since they do not prepare the *kəya* (beer) by themselves. Preparing the *kemālaya* is much easier for women, but since they are not married they do not have the resource, i.e. grains for the beer and a house of their own to keep the belongings and make the provision for the participants. Thus in the marriage process the individual becomes a recognized adult who can prepare the *kemālaya* and call for the labour of other members. As a result a

person does not only individualize his own labour but also gets the communal labour for his individual benefits. This works for both sexes.

Thus Boserup's assertion lacks broader understanding of the context where such gendered relations function and in most of the cases she singled out one dimension and missed the full context. She also belittled women among shifting cultivators and reduced them to a level of passive forced labourers in order to show male domination. Boserup also went a great length to prove her assertion and made a comparison between African shifting cultivation and Asian plough cultivation. Boserup's argument rather implicitly approves that Asia is more developed than Africa and plough cultivation is a sign of such difference (Boserup 1970: 26, 31).

In general shifting cultivators are misrepresented and misunderstood in many ways. It is difficult to reach a conclusion and draw shared common features based on the limited and less informed literature available. If we take such measures as a yardstick, the Gumuz would not be included in a category of shifting cultivators. Thus the empirical data I have discussed shows the limitations of the existing discourse of shifting cultivation and calls for a broader focus and rethinking that will help understand the seemingly simple socio-cultural dynamics.

References

- Berihun M. Mekonnen. 2004. *The Past in the Present: The Dynamics of Identity and Otherness among the Gumuz of Ethiopia*. PhD Dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim.
- Berihun M. Mekonnen. 1999. 'Spontaneous Settlement and interethnic Relations in Mätäkäl: Northwest Ethiopia.' In Harald Aspen and Abdulhamid B. Kello (Eds.), *Poverty and Resources: Ethiopian Rural Realities*. Workshop Papers on Ethiopian Development, No. 13. Trondheim: Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Pp. 73-84.
- Berihun M. Mekonnen. 1996. *Spontaneous Settlement and interethnic Relations in Mätäkäl: Northwest Ethiopia*. M.A. Thesis in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia.
- Boserup, Ester. 1981. *Population and Technological Change: A Study of Long-Term Trends*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Boserup, Ester. 1970. *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. New York: St Martin's Press.
- Grigg, David B. 1974. *The Agricultural Systems of the World: An Evolutionary Approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, Allen. 1989. 'Horticulturalists: Economic Behaviour in bands.' In Stuart Plattner (Ed.). *Economic Anthropology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Pp. 49 – 77.
- Olson, James Stuart. 1996. *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethno-Historical Dictionary*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press.
- Plattner, Stuart (Ed.). 1989. *Economic Anthropology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- UNDP/RRC. 1984. *The Nomadic Areas of Ethiopia*. Study Report IV: Adis Ababa (unpublished).
- Warner, Katherine. 1991. *Shifting cultivators: Local technical knowledge and natural resource management in the humid tropics*. Rome: FAO

Sharing System of the “Scarce Resources” in Southern Ethiopia

Toru SOGA¹

There are increasing the conflicts among the pastoral societies in East Africa. At the present day, the mass media tend to report that rival pastoralists compete for the scarce resources such as livestock, green pasture and water in the semi-arid region. Such a way of explanation is also common in the academic discourses. In other words, both scholar and journalist reproduce the dogma that pastoralists make conflict over scarce resources. However, no explanation has been done on what is the scarce resource in the pastoral society.

Introduction

The pasture and the water point are the important ecological resources for the pastoral people in East Africa. Previous research have revealed that the pastoralist have vast territory, and have specific ownership right of the water point or fruit tree (Galaty 1994). Numerous attempts have revealed that the pastoralist change their moving pattern in accordance with the seasonal change in the distribution and amount of the ecological resources (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Gulliver 1955, Spencer 1965). Thus, ecological resources are important that is directly connected with the pastoral behavior.

There is fairly general agreement that pastoral groups have competed the ecological resources. Evans-Pritchard (1940) describes the relationships between the Nuer and other ethnic groups over ecological resources as competitive. He explains that the Nuer “wars against Dinka tribes have been directed to seizure of cattle and control of pastures (16),” and “Nuer war with the Dinka has been almost entirely offensive and directed towards appropriation of herds and annexation of grazing grounds (48)”

As we have seen above, there is a strong image that the pastoralists are fierce and warlike over ecological resources. However, such an image as pastoralist compete the ecological resources is derived from the data when the pastoral societies were exposed to the expanding Ethiopian empire and the colonial invasion. Johnson (1981) reveals that the Nuer, which Evans-Pritchard describes as warlike, maintained a good relationship with neighboring Dinka just twenty-five years before Evans-Pritchard carried out his field research, and the belligerence of the Nuer had been made under the complex interaction between pastoral groups and the Anglo-Egyptian Government. This suggests that the pastoralist do coexist with other pastoral groups over ecological resources so long as the external power do not affect.

New concept of arid land suggests that there was a coexistence system among the pastoral societies. Before, the arid ecosystem was understood as the equilibrium system. In these years, it has been established that the arid ecosystem is nonequilibrium that characterized by capricious rainfall and heterogeneous distribution of the green

¹ Hirosaki University, Faculty of Humanities. 1 Bunkyocho, Hirosaki, Aomori 036-8560, Japan. E-mail: sogap@cc.hirosaki-u.ac.jp

pasture, and so on. The large fluctuation in climate or unpredictable drought was not the exceptional case in the equilibrium system, but the common phenomenon in the nonequilibrium system. The dramatic paradigm changes from equilibrium towards nonequilibrium spotlight on the traditional pastoral system. For example, pastoralist used to move their livestock to far off distant foreign lands to prevent the severe drought. Such pastoral movement is now understood as an adaptation to the nonequilibrium arid ecosystem (Ellis & Swift 1988). This also suggest that pastoralist survive the severe environment by coexisting with other pastoral groups.

In addition, there are some studies that support the coexistence of the pastoral societies. Spencer (1973) clarifies the broad symbiotic relationship between the Rendille and the Samburu. Schlee (1989) clarify the changes of the ethnic identity among the pastoral societies, and Gufu (1996) describe different ethnic people access to the Boran's well by changing their ethnic identities. Kawai (2004) observes the Dodoth work together with their enemy Turkana at the well after they make peace, while they raid each other for robbing the cattle in wartime. There is a possibility that the pastoralist coexist over ecological resources, while they raid for robbing the livestock.

Although the pastoral conflicts have been understood as the competition over ecological resources, it is rare to write the coexistence, sharing, and mutual help between the pastoral societies, except for these recent works. This paper aims to provide the coexistence system among the pastoral societies, focusing on the pastoral Gabra Miigo² and the Boran in Southern Ethiopia.

The Dogma As Competition over Scarce Resources.

1-1. How the Pastoral Conflict are Described.

Let us start with how the pastoral conflicts are described in Mass Media, focusing on two rival ethnic groups. They are the Gabra Malbe and the Boran. They are living in both Northern Kenya and Southern Ethiopia. On 12th July 2005, there was a terrible massacre in a small village called Torbi, in Northern Kenya. Early in the morning, the well-armed Boran killed the Gabra Malbe villager. At least 76 people, including 22 children, were killed on the spot. BBC³ reports that the Gabra Malbe and the Boran have feuded over water and pasture in the semi-arid region. Reuters⁴ also reports that the fighting over scarce resources like pasture and water has been exacerbated by a drought.

In June 2006, there occurred another conflict between the Boran and the Guji in Southern Ethiopia. More than 100 people were killed, and 90,000 fled. The Sudan Tribune⁵ closes the article with the words that "Ethiopia's arid southern region has been a scene of repeated conflicts between pastoralist communities battling for scarce water and pasture."

Judging from these articles, there is cliché that describe the conflict in the pastoral societies. Many anthropologists presuppose this view. Those who wrote the

² There are two groups identify themselves as "Gabra" along the border area between Ethiopia and Kenya. One group lives mainly in Kenya and is called "Malbe" by the other Gabra group that lives in Ethiopia; this Ethiopian group is called the "Miigo" by the Malbe. To avoid confusion, these two groups are hereafter referred to as the Gabra Malbe (in Kenya) and Gabra Miigo (in Ethiopia).

³ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4682117.stm>

⁴ <http://today.reuters.com/News/CrisesArticle.aspx?storyId=L06793993>

⁵ http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=16160

ethnography of pastoral societies, innocently mention the scarcity of the green pasture, water, and labor forces.

1-2. Question about the Dogma as Conflict over Scarce Resources.

However, this cliché is open to question. There are two questions arisen from both subject and object that concern this cliché.

The first is the object. Although many insist the scarcity of the resources, no one clarify what is really scarce in pastoral societies. We just regard such resource as water or pasture as scarce. As for Torbi of massacre, there is enough pasture, while no water. Precisely, the scarcity is difficult to define. That is comparative concept, determined by supply and demand. In case of the pastoral society, the degree of the scarcity of each ecological resource is changing depending on the season, place, the population pressure of both human being and livestock and the balance between the labor consumption and potential labor force. So, even if pastoralist make such conflict over scarce resources, it is still difficult for us to determine the real scarce resource over which they make conflict.

The second problem is the subject. The dogma as conflict over scarce resources circulates in biology and economics circles. In the biology circle, the actor who compete each other over scarce resource is the each individual. Therefore, it is difficult to apply the biological dogma to the ethnic based conflict, because the ethnic group cannot be the actor in biology circle. On the other hand, there are three kinds of actor who keeps accounts, such as the household, company and state, in the economic circle. In general, the pastoral society is regarded as the acephalous and has no institutionalized political leadership roles such as chiefs and kings. So, it is also difficult to apply the economic dogma innocently. Before applying the economic dogma, we should confirm that the concerned ethnic group have some institutionalized political leadership and calculate the some economic cost and profit.

1-3. Competition over Scarce Resource in Southern Ethiopia.

In southern Ethiopia, there occurred many conflicts along the Regional State border area in these years. It offers the key to an understanding of how people are misled by this dogma for understanding the pastoral conflict.

The conflicts in southern Ethiopia were understood as the conflict over scarce resource. However, there is an important political background of these conflicts. Before 1991, the boundaries of the region were drawn along the natural divide such as big river. Thus, the region is not relevant to the distribution of the ethnic group. As for Somali people, they lived in three different regions in those days.

After EPRDF seized the power, they soon introduced the ethnic based federal system in 1994 and changed their regional boundaries. Thanks to this, the Somali people got their territory as a regional state of which shape roughly correspond with their living place. The regional boundary between the Oromia and the Somali State was provisionally drawn as the Fig. 1 shows. However, there are many Somali people living in the eastern Dirre area, where became provisionally an Oromia regional state. They are obliged to live under the Oromo administration.

The provisional boundary that allowed the Oromo's annexation of this area triggered the Somali people's opposition movement. The Somali began to attack the Oromo along the regional boundary between the Somali Regional State and the Oromia Regional State. For example, there occurred at least seven conflicts along the border area from 2001 to 2004. The Garre Somali attacked the Boran Oromo and the Guji

Oromo, and at least seventeen people were killed. During a situation like this, local people began to understand such phenomenon as a resource conflict.

The Boran and Guji explain that the Garre Somali caused these conflicts to seize the land by chasing the Oromo people away from this area. It is regarded as the movement of territorial expansion by the Somali regional state. For example, they said that Garre Somali caused the conflict at Wachile in September 2001 in order to occupy the eastern side of the Wachile-Moyale road. As well, they said that the Garre Somali caused the conflicts before the local referendum that was held in October 2004. The government declared that the attribution of Moyale city, Arero town, and Wachile town to either the Oromia Regional State or the Somali Regional State would be determined by the result of the local referendum. They say the Garre Somali caused the conflicts for chasing away the Oromo people from the area to achieve a beneficial result in the local referendum. For maintaining the public order and security, federal government dispatched a troop to Southern Ethiopia, and tried to disarm the Garre Somali.

As we have seen above, the conflicts along the regional boundary are regarded by the local people as resource conflicts now. The Oromo people think that the Garre Somali have longing for expansion of their Regional State. In rivalry with the Garre Somali, the Boran Oromo and the Guji Oromo intellectuals also claimed their title to the land and water points. Now, the ecological resources such as land and water points became an object of exclusive occupation.

Moreover, we should not overlook the fact that the political post is now counted as an important resource. The intellectuals wish to obtain the political post such as governor, mayor, chief and other administrators. These political posts might be the real scarce resource. The local intellectuals, not only educated but also a person having a great knowledge of the national and international politics like a prosperous merchant, play an important role in a meeting. They understand the phenomenon in reference to the modern dogma as competition over scarce resource that circulates in the national and international politics. Consequently, they simplified the complicated concept of scarcity of resource and lump all ecological resources together, and regard them as scarce.

These conflicts over "scarce resources" differ from traditional raiding that aims to rob livestock of other ethnic groups. The conflicts in pastoral societies seem now indeed to be "resource conflicts" as Markakis (1998) described.

So far, we can sum up the distinct characters of conflicts in pastoral societies today. It is intellectuals who mostly live in the town that promote the conflict. They are absorbed in the expansionism, responding to the national policy such as federalism. They agitate people and rekindle the ethnic consciousness. While they show people that the land and water points are the scarce resources, the political post such as local administrator seems to be real resources that they wish to obtain. Thus, we can say that it is not pastoralist but the modern town living intellectuals who was born into families of pastoralist that make such conflicts today.

This drives us to the question whether pastoralists made conflict over scarce resources in past. For criticizing the dogma, and producing the academic counter discourse, we should study more on the past inter-ethnic relationship over ecological resources.

Reconstruct the Past Ethnic Relationship

From now on, we will examine the coexistence system of the pastoral societies over scarce water in past. First, let me explain the general information about focusing people, times and the method for reconstructing the past.

2-1. People

In Southern Ethiopia, the Gabra Miigo and the Boran lived in the Dirre, before. The Gabra Miigo are camel pastoralist, speak the Oromo language, have Oromo-Somali mixed culture. The population of the Gabra Miigo is estimated about 30,000. On the other hand, the Boran are cattle pastoralist, speak also the Oromo language, and they are proud of their Oromo culture. The population of the Boran is estimated about 200,000 in Ethiopia.

2-2. Focusing Times

We can reconstruct the past of Gabra Miigo by their accurate chronology (Soga 2006). According to their chronology, pastoral people in Southern Ethiopia prominently aroused their ethnic consciousness around 1963. There occurred a Robou war between the Garre Somali and the Boran in 1963-65. It was triggered by the Garre Somali who supported the movement "pan-Somalism" or Greater Somalia that aimed to unify the all areas populated by Somalis into one Nation, Somalia. Thus, our targeted time to analyze the ethnic relationship should be before 1963 to avoid the influence of the exclusive nationalism.

2-3. Method

Before reconstructing the past ethnic relationship, we should consider the appropriate method to reconstruct the past of preliterate oral society. In general, historian reconstructs the history of preliterate society from the past oral episodes as well as the colonial documents. The collective memory based on the past episodes has a framework of "narrative story." It is also structured by the opening and the ending as well as the plot line, and thus tends to neglect the trivial persons and events that are irrelevant to the plot line.

This method can reconstruct the "declarative" experiences. However, it is easily affected by the present political situation. Collective memory based on the "episode" is dynamically re-interpreting and re-constructing according as their political, economic, and social positions.

It is, however, not profitable for our purpose to reconstruct the past ethnic relationship. The Gabra Miigo today emphasize the cruelty of the Boran and how they have suffered from the Boran. So, we cannot depend on the collective memory based on the "episode," otherwise we would reproduce their antipathy. Thus, we need another method for our purpose.

On behalf of the collective memory based on the "episode," I would like to propose another collective memory based on the "place." The collective memory based on the "place" has a framework of "scene" that is abundant with the trivial people, materials and events irrelevant to the plot line of story. Such detail data is useful to clarify the "non-declarative" experiences.

What's more, the collective memory based on the place seems to be unaffected by the present political circumstances, because it is far from the plot line of story. Thus, we can expect that the collective memory based on the place could reconstruct the past inter-ethnic relationship over ecological resources.

Massive Well Cluster in Southern Ethiopia.

We are now able to reconstruct the past ethnic relationship. Hereafter, we concentrate on the sharing system of the massive well clusters around Dirre area in Southern Ethiopia.

3-1. Dirre Area and Tula Massive Well Cluster.

There is no available river in dry season in Dirre area, and also the ground water level is quite low. Thus, people dug the massive wells, and have maintained for hundreds years. The massive well that has an exhaustless supply of water is called *tula*. Many *tula* wells gather in the groundwater veins that are unevenly distributed in Dirre area.

It is the Boran that possess the *tula* wells, and their ownership right is grounded in myth. On the other hand, the camel pastoralist the Gabra Miigo do not have ownership right on these wells. The Boran have a segmental society, and have some clans. Each clan collectively has an ownership right of *tula* well. For example, there are twenty *tula* wells in Igdali. These twenty *tula* wells have their own name, and each clan collectively own it. The Boran have developed unique rules for managing *tula* well. For example, they have two kind of manager of each *tula* well: the *qonfi* and the *hereega*. A man known as *qonfi*, or caretaker has a responsibility for maintenance and repair of the *tula* well, while a man known as *hereega*, or distributor who is appointed by *qonfi* has responsibility for managing the users.

The *tula* well is quite massive construction. There dug a sloop for guiding livestock downward, and the soil mounded around. The guide sloop is as long as 100-150 meters from the gateway to the body of the *tula* well. Both sides of the guide sloop are precipice, thus, it is encircled by the fence to prevent the stray livestock fall into the guide sloop from the ground.

On the watering day, the herd of cattle brought in a *tula* well is held at the gate. Both sides of the gate are tightly put a wood fence to prevent and control the rushing thirsty cattle. The gatekeeper allows 10-15 cattle going to the well at a time. Going downward the narrow guide sloop, you can find the hall. Here, you can give your cattle water. At the end of the hall, there is a trough made of clay. Lined cattle drink water from the trough. Beyond of the trough, there is the main body of the well. The mouth of the well is very small, and it is very deep. The ground water level is so low that the bottom of the well reaches 30-40 meters from ground. From six to twelve workers get into the main body of the well, and draw the bucketful of water in relay. In total, thirty to sixty workers are needed for watering livestock, because some should control the rushing thirsty animals at the gateway, some should care the watering livestock at the hall, and others should draw water. I would like to emphasize the exhausting labor of the watering day.

3-2. Sharing Water between Boran and Gabra Miigo.

From here, let us examine the coexistence system between the Boran and the Gabra over the *tula* well, based on the collective memory based on the place.

3-2-1. Inter-Ethnic Relationship

Gufu (1996) reveals that there were three ways for utilizing *tula* wells by different ethnic groups. First, individuals could access to the *tula* wells, if he became a clan member of the Boran through a certain ritual ceremony. Second, the other ethnic group's clan or lineage could access to the *tula* wells, if they affiliated to a particular

Boran clan. Third, those who had patron-client relationship with the Boran could access to the *tula* wells.

As Gufu reveals, the Boran did not possess their wells exclusively. The *tula* wells were semi-open for other ethnic groups through three ways.

For the moment let us look closely at the first and second indications. In a narrow sense, the Boran do not seem to allow other ethnic people or group to access the *tula* well unless they become the Boran. However, the Boran sometimes allow other ethnic people to access to the *tula* well, although they do not become the Boran. As Schlee (1989) clarified, there are many inter-ethnic clans among the pastoral societies in Horn of Africa. People have been moved freely across the permeable ethnic boundary and they established the inter-ethnic relationship by creating the new lineage, or affiliating with particular clan. This is important, because pastoral people can utilize this inter-ethnic relationship to access to *tula* well without changing their ethnic identity. Schlee (2004) suggests the existence of cross-cutting ties, or inter-ethnic clans opens up the possibilities for the pastoral people to access to the well, although it cannot always succeed.

Judging from the above, the Gufu’s first and second indications imply an existence of wider sharing system among the pastoral societies.

3-2-2. Patron-Client Relationship

Turning now to the Gufu’s third indication: patron-client relationship. As for the Gabra Miigo, they use mainly this way to access to the *tula* well. Let us examine the patron-client relationship between the Gabra Miigo and the Boran, by the collective memory based on the place, taking special note whether the Boran strictly apply this rule. I interviewed a Gabra Miigo man who was born in 1940. In 1961, he stayed near Web in Dirre area and use the *tula* well called Gorooto. I asked him many questions, focusing

Table 1. The user of the first day.

Name	Ethnicity	Clan
1 Dima Boru	Boran	Karayu
2 Godana Galma	Boran	karayu
3 Galgalo Wachile	Boran	karayu
4 Adano Jilo	Gabra Miigo	Magale
5 Yatani Aga	Boran	Karayu
6 Wario Liban	Boran	Karayu
7 Godana Adi	Gabra Miigo	Kabarkar
8 Bonaiya Eecha	Gabra Miigo	Magale
9 Chafa Guyo	Boran	Karayu
10 Dido Racha	Gabra Miigo	Magale
11 Abudi Boru	Gabra Miigo	Artiwiina

Table 2. The user of the second day.

Name	Ethnicity	Clan
1 Wako Duba	Boran	Karayu
2 Jilo Aga	Boran	karayu
3 Dido Arero	Boran	karayu
4 Boru Adele	Boran	Karayu
5 Wako Dida	Gabra Miigo	Uchoot
6 Boru Jawe	Boran	Karayu
7 Dhaddac ha Dida	Gabra Miigo	Adotile
8 Galgalo Gorolcha	Boran	Karayu
9 Jilo Aro	Gabra Miigo	Adotile
10 Jilo Guyo	Boran	Karayu
11 Ali Boru	Gabra Miigo	Kowa
12 Dub Adano	Gabra Miigo	Kowa

on the many places of the well. When I asked the watering scene at the hall of the well, he answered me that they watered cattle in three days cycle. Then he remembers the watering scene of first and second day of the watering cycle. The table 1 shows the users of the Gorooto well of the first day and Table 2 also shows the users of the second day. The Name shows the owner of the cattle herd. The names are arranged in the order of watering. Camel watered after cattle. There are sharp contrast between the

Boran and the Gabra Miigo in the varieties of their clan. All of the Boran users belong to Karayu clan, while the Gabra Miigo belongs to different clans.

Table 3 is made up by these two tables, and shows the percentage of the users arranged by clan. The Gorooto well is collectively possessed by the Karayu clan, and all of the Boran user belongs to Karayu. So, the Boran seems to use their well. On the other hand, the Gabra users consist of six clans. Though I cannot check all of these men, because they are scattered over a large area, at least three of them have no patron-client relationship with the Karayu clan of Boran. Only those who are Adotile clan have patron-client relationship with the Boran. Although, it is partial data, this is important. Gufu regards the patron-client relationship as limited relationship. He seems to imagine that only the Gabra Miigo who have patron-client relationship can access to the well. In this case, those Gabra Miigo who have no patron-client relationship cannot access to the well. However, the patron-client relationship in practice is not limited relationship. Even the Gabra Miigo who have no patron-client relationship with the Boran can access to a *tula* well by using someone's patron-client relationship as a foothold.

Table 3. Variety of Clans

Ethnicity	Clan	Person
Boran	Karayu	13
Gabra Miigo	Magale	3
	Kowa	2
	Adotile	2
	Kabarkar	1
	Uchoot	1

Table 4. The workers

Name	Ethnicity	Clan
1 Mohamedo Doko	Gabra Miigo	Kowa
2 Edin Ukha	Gabra Miigo	Kabarkar
3 Jilo Dabella	Gabra Miigo	Kabarkar
4 Gila Galgalo	Gabra Miigo	Kabarkar
5 Hassano Guyo	Gabra Miigo	Alamalo
6 Isako Jilo	Gabra Miigo	Uchoot
7 Abudi Adano	Gabra Miigo	Lossa
8 Jades Tache	Boran	Maliyu
9 Jades Uka	Boran	Maliyu
10 Tari Liban	Boran	Maliyu
11 Tunale Sora	Boran	Karayu

Let us now return to table 1 & 2. These tables clearly show that the Boran watered their cattle before the Gabra Miigo. It was a result of the competition. People wanted to avoid watering their cattle in the evening, because on the way to a settlement, the wild beasts such as lions often attacked the cattle in night. So, they competed to watering cattle earlier than others. To achieve this, they tried to influence *hereega*, or distributor by bribery such as goats. The Boran who keep a lot of cattle that is needed watering every three days more eager water than the Gabra Miigo who rather keep camel that can survive more than nine days without water. However, those Gabra Miigo who kept a lot of cattle joined to this competition. Here, we just need mention that it was household who join this competition, according as their pastoral situation. Ethnic group was not the actor who competed water in those days.

3-2-3. Sharing Labor force.

Now, there is a further point that needs to be clarified. The Boran approved the Gabra Miigo who have patron-client relationship for utilizing the *tula* well. However, if the Gabra ride freely on someone's patron-client relationship, such an approval becomes meaningless, especially if they wish to exclude non-related persons. Why did the Boran also approve such free riders?

The answer is in the table 4. This table shows the workers who draw water together at Gorooto well. The Gabra Miigo cooperated with the Boran in drawing water from the well. From the view of the Boran, it is profitable for them. As I mentioned previously, the *tula* wells are so deep that many labor forces are needed. Watering livestock is exhausting labor. People should prepare more people as pool of workforce. So, the Boran needed the Gabra Miigo labor forces.

This fact implies that the scarcity of the labor forces was bigger than that of water for the Boran. A Gabra Miigo man says, they boycotted drawing water, if there occurred some misunderstandings or problems between the Gabra Miigo and the Boran. Such words also reinforce this implication.

3-3. *Pasture: Another Scarce Resource.*

Lastly, we focus on another scarce resources; that is green pasture around the well. The each well cluster is separated from by 15-40 kilometer, and thus, people can widely use pastures as a whole in Dirre area. Looking closely at the ecological facts, however, settlements gather around the well cluster and the pastures around the well cluster tend to be poor condition. Especially, affluent water of the well clusters such as Web, Ig dali and Daas in central Dirre area attract more livestock, which cause overgrazing and therefore there lack pastures, while the pastures around the well clusters such as Igo, Gorile and Dubluk in western Dirre area where there are small amount of water is rather better (Gufu 1998:20). There was a shortage of pasture in the central Dirre area where the Gabra Miigo and Boran coexisted. So, we have another question whether the Boran competed over pasture around the well to which they allow the Gabra Miigo access.

The competition over pasture was avoided by the spatial compartmentalization. Helland (1980) suggests that the Boran settlement locate within a 15 kilometer radius of the well and they take cattle for day-trip herding within a 15 radius of the settlement. The Gabra Miigo settlement locates further from the well. They say that the Boran are supposed to live near the well, because the calf cannot walk a long distance. The calf constitutes a limiting factor for the Boran of the residential pattern. The Gabra Miigo also have small number of cattle. They can, however, carry enough water for their calf from the well to their settlement by camel. The Gabra Miigo can use pastures further from the well. As a consequence, the Gabra Miigo and the Boran are spatially compartmentalized and they can avoid the competition over scarce pastures around the well.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, the patron-client relationship also give other people a stepping stone to access to the *tula* well. In exchange for Boran’s favors, the Gabra Miigo provided labor forces. Lastly, I wish to add little more information and try to criticize the dogma as “conflict over scarce resources.”

In past, the Gabra Miigo and the Boran developed a flexible inter-ethnic relationship. However, their ethno-scapes were different each other. From the Gabra Miigo’s viewpoint, the patron-client relationship provided a great opportunity to access to the *tula* well. Even those who had no patron-client relationship could be free riders. On behalf of that, the Gabra Miigo provided their labor forces.

From the Boran viewpoint, the patron-client relationship was important when the *qonfi*, or caretaker began repairing *tula* well in large scale. On such occasions, the clan members of the Boran were supposed to donate their livestock as a food for the

repairing workers. The Boran also distributed a certain amount of repairing expense to the client Gabra Miigo. The patron-client relationship clearly shows the extent of the responsibility for this duty. On the contrary, the Boran approved even non-related Gabra Miigo in daily use, just because of their labor forces.

Now, we can say, pastoralists developed the sharing system of the ecological resources in past, and the dogma as pastoralists make conflict over scarce resources is doubtful. Also, as I described in section 1-3, it is those town intellectuals that have realized and simplified the phenomenon by this dogma. Again, they are the one who have realized this dogma in the pastoral societies today.

Lastly, I'd like to mention a little bit about the theory for future coexistence. When I visited at the border city Moyale in August 2006, I found a lot of friends became refugees. They were chased away from their homeland by the Guji Oromo. The same observation applies to this case. Behind of the back, there was a politician who agitated the pastoral Guji. We should not overlook that this dogma have high affinity with the conflict, and both the mass media and scholar reproduce this dogma. It is very harmful to reproduce the dogma out of hand. We should rather produce the counter narrative, or academic statement that reveals the coexistence of the different ethnic groups and their sharing system over scarce resources.

References

- Ellis, James and David, Swift. 1988. ‘Stability of African pastoral ecosystems: Alternative paradigms and implications for development.’ *Journal of Range Management*. 41(6). pp.450-459.
- Evans-Pritchard, E. E. 1940. *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*. Oxford University Press.
- Galaty, John. 1994. ‘Rangeland Tenure and Pastoralism in Africa.’ In: *African Pastoralist Systems*. Elliot Fratkin, Kathleen Galvin and Eric Roth (eds.), Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp.185-204.
- Gulliver, Philip. 1955. *The Family Herds: A Study of Two Pastoral Tribes*. Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Helland, Johan. 1980. ‘Social Organization and Water Control among the Borana.’ In: *Five Essays on the Study of Pastoralists and the Development of Pastoralism*. Socialantropologisk Institutt Universitetet I Bergen, pp.47-75.
- Johnson, Douglas. 1981. ‘The Fighting Nuer: Primary Sources and the Origins of a Stereotype.’ *Africa*. 51(1), pp.508-527.
- Kawai, Kaori. 2004. ‘The raiding and negiboring relationship among the Dodoth.’ In: *Nomads*. (in Japanese) Jilo Tanaka, Shun Sato, Kazutaka Sugawara and Itaru Ohta (eds.), Shouwado, pp. 542-566.
- Markakis, John. 1998. *Resource Conflict in the Horn of Africa*. SAGE Publications.
- Gufu Oba. 1996. ‘Shifting Identities along Resource Border: Becoming and Continuing to be Boorana Oromo.’ In: *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquiries*. P.T.W. Baxter, Jan Hultin and Alessandro Triulzi (eds.), Red Sea Press, pp.117-131.
- Gufu Oba. 1998. *Assessment of Indigenous Range Management Knowledge of the Booran Pastoralists of Southern Ethiopia*. Report for GTZ/BLPDP in Cooperation with Oromiya Regional Bureau for Agricultural Development.
- Schlee, Günther. 1989. *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*. Manchester University Press.
- Schlee, Günther. 2004. ‘Taking Side and Constructing Identities: Reflections on Conflict Theory.’ *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*. (N.S.) 10: 135-156.
- Soga, Toru. 2006. ‘Changes in Knowledge of Time among Gabra Miigo Pastoralists of Southern Ethiopia.’ *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*. 10. pp.23-44.
- Spencer, Paul. 1965. *The Samburu: A Study of Gerontocracy in a Nomadic Tribe*. University of California Press.
- Spencer, Paul. 1973. *Nomads in Alliance: Symbiosis and growth among the Rendille and Samburu of Kenya*. Oxford University Press.

Beads in Konso, Southern Ethiopia

Birgitta Kimura¹ and Dinote Kusia Shenkere²

Glass trade beads are commonly encountered in archaeological excavations. Their use as chronological markers and indications of trade is well-known, but what they mean to their users have been less studied. This study explores the use and meaning of beads in contemporary Konso society. In addition, we report the analysis of an excavated bead assemblage from the Karate region of Konso.

Introduction

The earliest glass beads were manufactured in India, but in the 17th to 19th century Europe, especially Italy and Holland, were the major producers of glass beads used in trade particularly in Africa and the Americas (Brain 1979, van der Sleen 1980). The majority of bead studies have focused on using them as chronological markers and as indications of trade (Brain 1979, Chami 1999, Hancock et al 1999, Kinahan 2000, DeCorse et al 2003, Robertshaw et al 2006). In North America bead chronologies based on European trade beads are well developed and quite fine-grained (Brain 1979), but in Africa most research has focused on earlier periods (Chittick 1974, Chami 1999). Kinahan (2000), however, showed how the trade bead assemblages recovered from archaeological sites in Namibia changed from the early contact period in the late 18th century to the colonial period in the 20th century. Indian and Roman beads found on the Swahili coast and Madagascar also clearly show the presence of trade networks from at least the 1st millennium AD (Chami 1999, Robertshaw et al 2006). It is more difficult to discern the meaning of beads to their users. From ethnographic studies it is known that beads are a source of wealth and status and can be markers of ethnicity as well as display the life stages of a person and that they may also be used for ritual purposes (Stine et al 1996, Sciama 1998, Carey, 1998, Ogundiran 2002).

This study will explore the use and meaning of different types of beads in contemporary Konso society. In addition, the analysis of beads recovered from a small-scale excavation will be reported and the assemblage compared to other bead assemblages of similar age³. The goal of the present study is two-fold: 1) to explore if there are chronological changes in the excavated bead assemblage; and 2) to explore similarities and differences between the meaning of beads in Konso, particularly in the Karate region, and that known from ethnographic sources.

¹ Department of Anthropology, 1112 Turlington, University of Florida, FL 32611, USA

² Cultural Bureau, Konso special Woreda, Konso, Ethiopia

³ This paper is based on dissertation work conducted in Konso September 2001 to July 2002, and it is an extension of the analysis of beads. The field work was supported by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship. I would like to thank Ato Jara Hailemariam at the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCCH) for administrative support, and Ato Awoke Amzaye at the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regional Bureau of Culture and Ato Sagoya Robia at the Cultural Bureau of the Konso Special Woreda for their help with the fieldwork. In addition, I like to thank the Konso people for their help and support.

Study area and methodology

Konso is situated in highlands in the Rift Valley in Southern Ethiopia. The Konso speak an Eastern Cushitic language and practice intensive agriculture (Hallpike 1972:3, 21-23). The area was incorporated into the Ethiopian empire in 1897. The traditional Konso settlements are situated on hillsides and enclosed by stone walls with an average height of 4 meters for intact walls (Kimura 2004: 81). The settlements contain ritual and public places and individual fenced households. Stone-lined agricultural terraces surround the settlements and a variety of crops are grown (Hallpike 1970, Westphal 1975:118-123, Amborn 1989). Hallpike (1972:71, 120-129) contends that the settlements are governed by elected councils and that there is no clear power structure either within or between settlements. This interpretation is corroborated by the lack of spatial hierarchy of settlements (Kimura 2006), but see Watson (1997) for a different view. Both households and agricultural fields are inherited by male heirs, with the oldest son receiving the majority. If there are no male heirs the nearest male relative inherits (Hallpike 1972: 99, 110-111). The only items a woman may inherit from her mother are personal ornaments and household pots.

Personal ornaments among the Konso include metal bracelets, shells, ostrich eggshell and glass beads. The ostrich egg shell beads are manufactured in Konso, whereas the glass beads nowadays are obtained from Addis Ababa. The trade route of older beads is uncertain, but they may have reached Konso with traders from Kenya, which is how salt and iron was obtained. Hallpike (1972:261) also mentions that some beads were brought to Konso by the Borana. It is possible that beads were shipped to the Swahili coast and traded overland through either Kenya or Somalia to Konso. Cowrie and marginella shells most likely originating from the Indian Ocean may have reached Konso by the same routes. A comparative collection of contemporary bead work and common trade beads was obtained during field work in 2001-2002. In addition a high status necklace was photographed as were all beads recovered from a small-scale excavation. The excavation and the attribute analysis of the beads are described in detail in Kimura (2004:186-209).

In brief a 4 m² test unit in an ash midden outside an abandoned part of the oldest area in the settlement of Olanta in the Karate region of Konso was excavated down to the original land surface. Ash middens are formed where the Konso deposit household waste and periodically burn it. They are placed outside the outer wall of the settlement, and each neighborhood within a settlement has its own ash midden. There are two problems with excavating ash middens. The first is that artifacts will sink in the matrix. The other is that when the midden reaches the height of the wall, it is flattened by shoveling the ash away from the wall. The test unit was placed on a flat area near the wall to avoid the risk of reversed stratigraphy. The excavation was stepped to minimize the risk of collapse and the unit was excavated in 5 cm levels within the natural stratigraphy. There were seven strata (fig 1), with glass trade beads found throughout the sequence. Based on the frequency of stone tools, metal artifacts and glass debris, the ash midden sequence can be divided into two major cultural layers.

The lower 4 strata contained substantial amounts of lithic artifacts suggesting that they were formed at a time when Konso was more isolated and relied on local materials for tool production. The upper 3 strata, on the other hand, contained metal artifacts including bullets and Haile Selassie coins, glass and few stone tools, indicating that it was formed after Konso was incorporated into the Ethiopian empire in 1897.

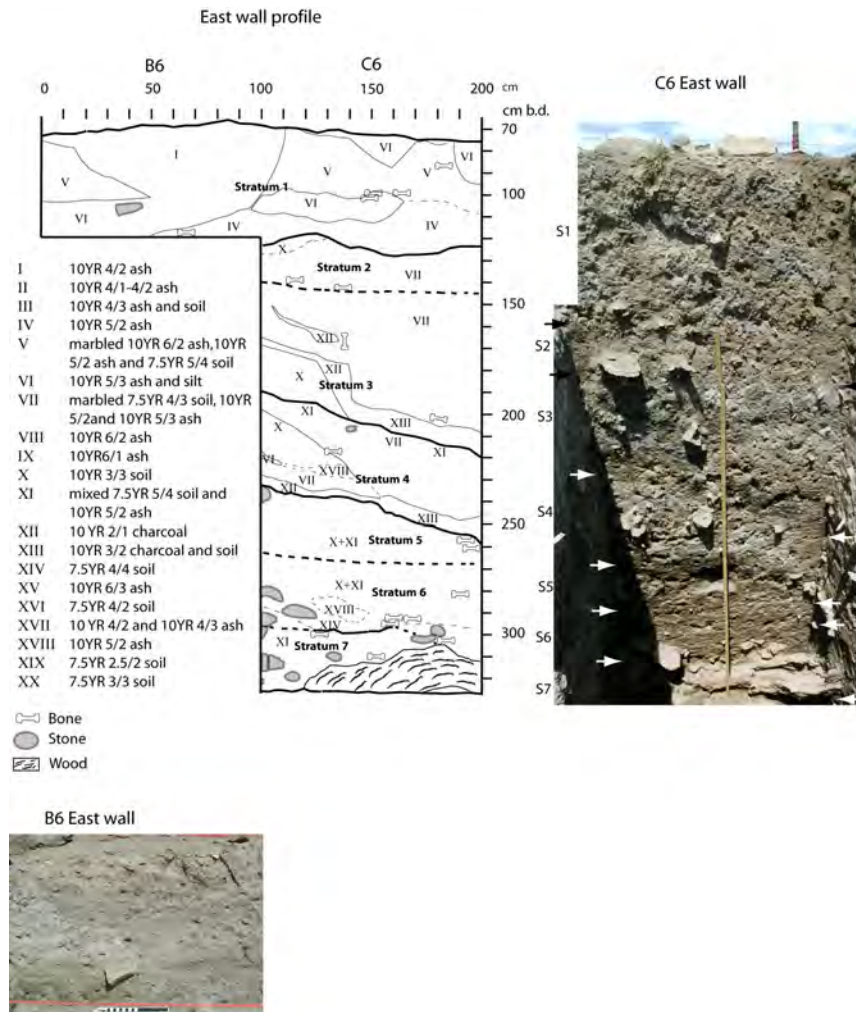


Figure 1. Stratigraphy in the ash midden (from Kimura 2004).

All excavated material was sieved through 1 and 5 mm screens and all artifacts collected. Glass beads were analyzed as to method of manufacture, color, shape and size. The typology is based on criteria used by Kidd and Kidd (1970), Brain (1979) and Kinahan (2000).

Beads from the excavation

A total of 460 beads and identifiable bead fragments were recovered from the ash midden. The types found are illustrated in figure 2. The frequency decreased with depth, and the lowest stratum only contained 3 beads. There were 97 beads/m³ in the uppermost stratum followed by 72, 59, 52, 45, 44 and 13 beads/m³ down to the lowest stratum. The vast majority, 87%, were drawn beads. Wound and mold pressed beads, 6.0 and 7.7% respectively, were rare in the 4 lower strata. There was only one bead with surface decoration, a small annular white bead with red and blue stripes, which was found in the uppermost stratum.

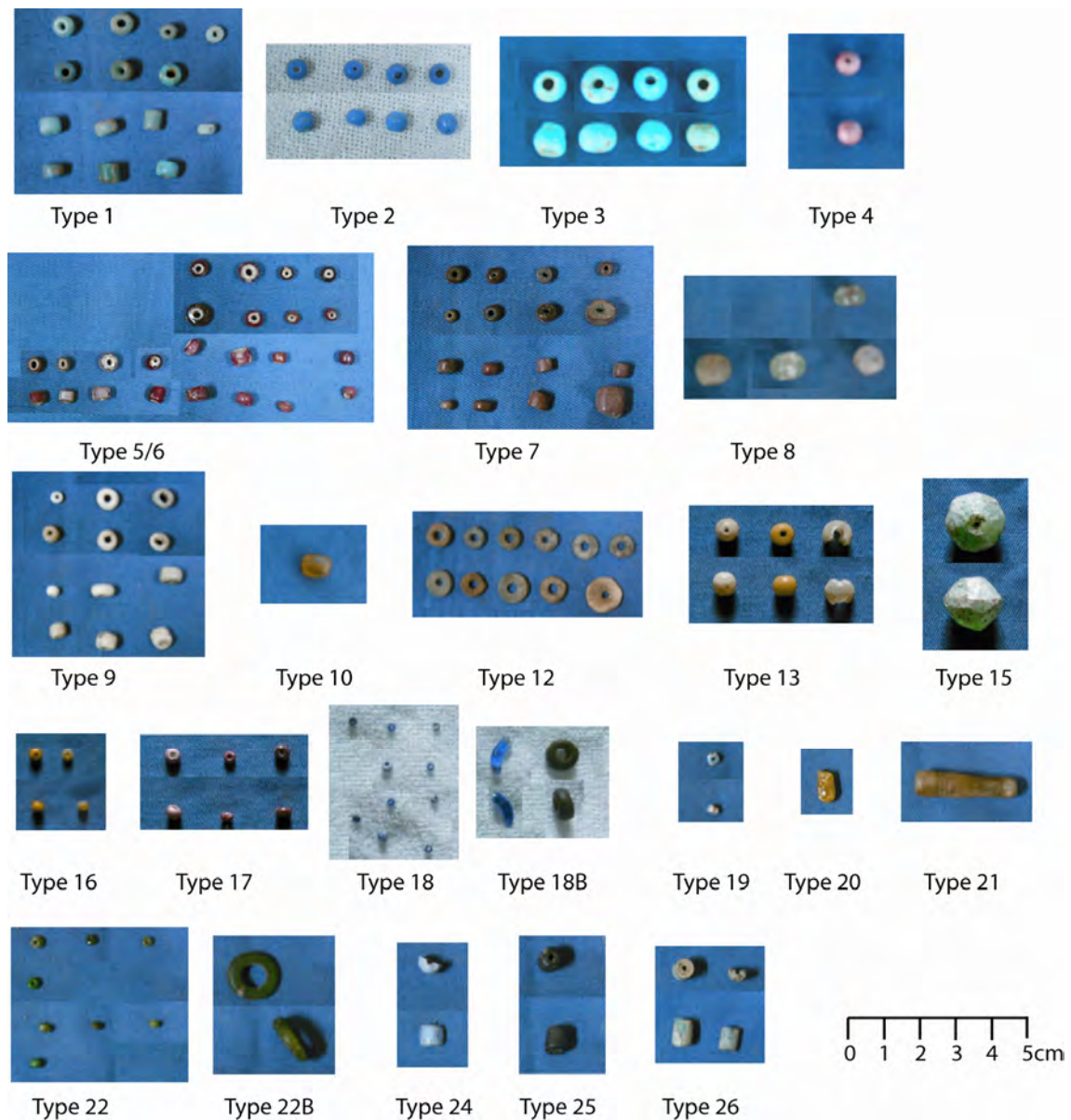


Figure 2. Bead types⁴ (modified from Kimura 2004).

⁴ 1=drawn, light blue-blue-green 2=mold pressed, blue 3=wound, blue, blue-green 4=wound, red 5=drawn, red with white interior, rounded 6=drawn, red with white interior, cylinder 7=drawn, red with dark interior 8=wound, clear 9=drawn or wound, white 10=plastic, yellow, oval 11=Cowrie shell 12=Ostrich eggshell 13=drawn or wound, yellow, round 14=indeterminate 15=mold pressed, multifaceted sphere 16=drawn or wound, yellow, annular 17=drawn or wound, red, annular 18=drawn or wound, blue, annular 19=drawn or wound, multicolor, annular 20=yellow, concave cone, side threaded 21=yellow, concave cone, top threaded 22=drawn or wound, green, annular 23=marginella shell 24=drawn or mold pressed, blue, faceted 25=drawn, dark blue-black, cylinder 26=drawn, blue with white interior 27=drawn, red cylinder

The frequency of specific bead types differed with depth (fig 3). The most common bead type, a drawn light blue bead (type 1), occurred in all strata except the lowest. A drawn red bead with white interior (type 5/6), commonly known as “white heart”, decreased in frequency with depth, whereas a drawn red bead with dark interior (type 7), known as “Indian red on green”, was more frequent in the lowest strata. Small annular beads (types 16-19 and 22), also known as seed beads, were restricted to the three uppermost strata. These are the type of beads that are obtained from Addis Ababa and used to make contemporary jewelry, although they were also manufactured in earlier times. A plastic bead, type 10, was only found in the top stratum, consistent with plastic beads being a very recent phenomenon. Ostrich eggshell beads (type 12) occurred at relatively low frequencies throughout the sequence except the lowest stratum consistent with them being manufactured in Konso. White drawn beads (type 9) were slightly more common in lower strata, but absent from the two lowest.

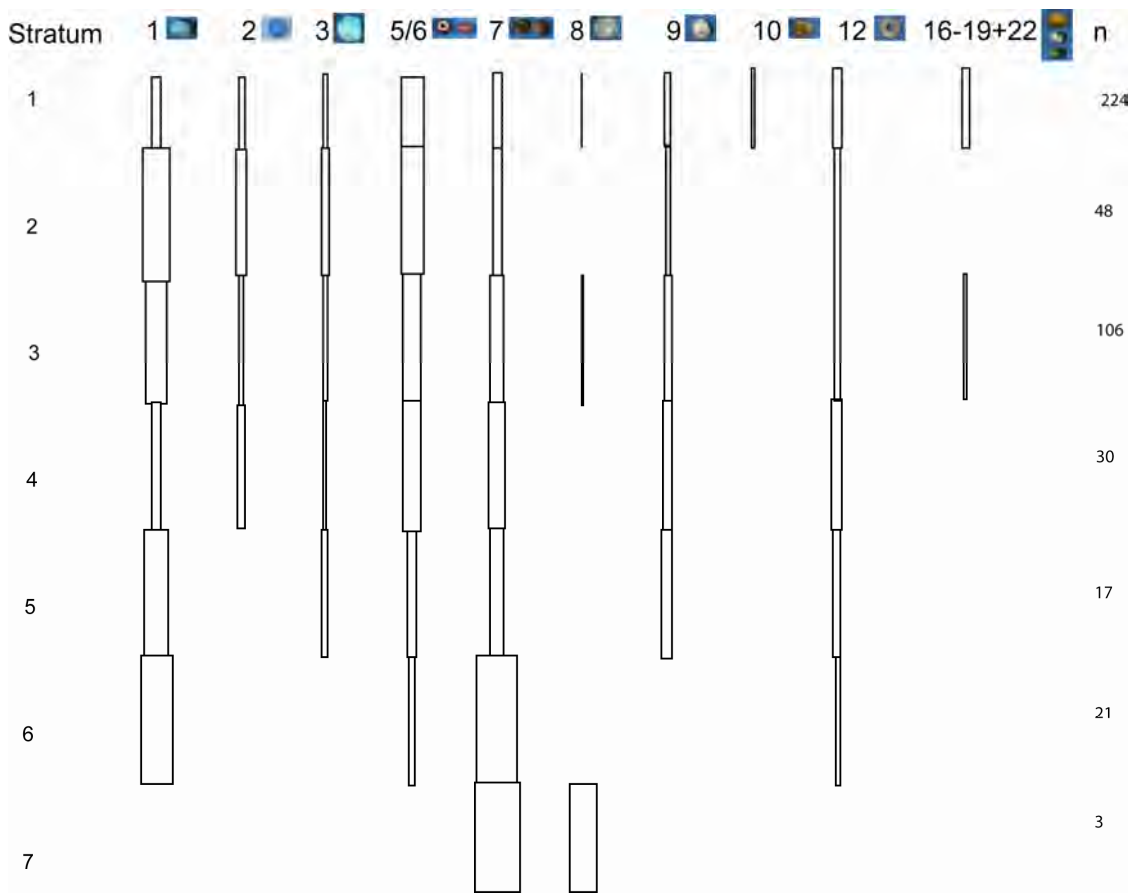


Figure 3. Bead type frequencies in the ash midden (from Kimura 2004)

Comparisons with other bead assemblages

The majority of the beads recovered in the excavation were glass trade beads of European manufacture, which have world-wide distribution. Unfortunately there have been few African studies of trade beads dating to periods after European contact and there are no published studies from Ethiopia. There are, however, well recorded bead assemblages from the Swahili coast, as well as from Namibia and Senegal dating from the last 500 years that can be used as comparisons (Kirkman 1974, Kinahan 2000, DeCorse et al 2003). Of particular value is the assemblage from Fort Jesus on the Swahili coast, where Kirkman recovered over 130,000 glass beads. Associated ceramics dated them from the early 17th to the 19th century. This assemblage is very important because it reflects the types of beads intended for trade and fits with one of the possible trade routes for the Konso beads. A drawback though, is that it does not include trade beads from the 20th century. Kinahan's (2000) Namibian study extends into the 20th century and may thus be a valuable comparison even though it is from a different region of Africa. DeCorse et al's (2003) study of beads recovered from surveys and excavations in Senegal includes sites dated to the 19th century and thus gives an example of European trade beads in West Africa. There are problems with comparisons of bead assemblages. One is that there is no standardized classification system. Even though most classifications are built on Kidd and Kidd's (1970) nested categories of manufacture, shape and color the tremendous variation in bead attributes means that each site will have many bead types and that there is some degree of subjectivity in the typology, particularly in regards to shape and color. Consequently comparisons have to rely on perceived similarities in assemblages based on photographs and descriptions and will not be standardized between studies. Chronological determinations are also difficult as beads are heirlooms and thus may be in use centuries after they first appear in an area. However, comparisons based on frequencies of several types of beads are likely to yield some chronological information as shown by Kinahan (2000). The current comparison is based mainly on color and to some degree manufacture and size, which are attributes that are well described in the sources used. The aim of the comparison (table 1) is two-fold. 1) To attempt to date the 2 main cultural layers recognized in the excavation by exploring if the frequency of bead types in them corresponds to dated frequencies of bead types in other areas. 2) To explore whether the distribution of bead types is likely to reflect availability of the different types of beads or reflect a choice of preferred types in the area. If the latter, the colors and perhaps the type of manufacture should differ between sites, particularly between Fort Jesus and Konso.

Most bead types recovered in the excavation show little change over time, but there are differences in the frequencies of Indian red on green, red on white, wound and molded beads and small annular beads. The Konso bead assemblage differs substantially from that of the 17th century in Fort Jesus, so it is likely to date to a more recent time. At Fort Jesus the "Indian red on green" bead increases in frequency in the 18th and 19th century, whereas the red on white bead is very rare at all time periods. The Indian red on green also predates the red on white bead in South Africa. In Konso it is more common in the 4 lower strata which suggests that these layers were deposited prior to the 20th century. The bead assemblage in the three upper strata in Konso do not fit with any time period at Fort Jesus, but the increase in red on white beads, wound beads and small annular beads is similar to that of the early 20th century bead type frequencies in South Africa suggesting that these layers were deposited after Fort Jesus was abandoned, probably in the 20th century.

Table 1 Comparison of bead frequencies (modified from Kimura 2004)

Type	Konso		Fort Jesus**		
	S1-3 %	S4-7 %	L 17th %	18th %	19th %
Drawn blue-green	22.0	25.9	2.9	0.2	0.2
Molded blue	5.5	3.4	0	0	<0.1
Wound blue	5.8	3.4	<0.1	<0.1	0.1
Red on white	27.8	15.5	0.1	0.1	0.7
Indian red on green	15.8	34.5	13.2	18.3	22.9
Drawn white	8.1	8.6	16.6	23.7	27.0
Yellow	1.3	0	6.4	1.7	0.2
Small annular	6.5	0	0	0	0
Blue on white	0.6	1.7	0.1	<0.1	0.2
Opaque dark blue	0	1.7	6.1	1.6	0.2
Transparent dark blue	0	0	35.6	43.5	27.0
Black	0	0	3.6	3.3	0.7
Orange	0	0	2.5	0.5	0.2
Other beads ^{*5}	6.5	5.2	12.8	6.9	20.5

	South Africa***			Senegal****
	L 18 th %	L 19 th %	E 20 th %	up to 20 th %
Drawn blue-green	27.2	6.4	3.5	2.1
Molded blue	0	0	0	0
Wound blue	2.5	0.8	17.8	0.2
Red on white	0	4.7	7.1	5.9
Indian red on green	8.8	0.8	0	12.2
Drawn white	4.6	55.8	0	25.1
Yellow	1.7	3.4	3.6	1.5
Small annular	0.8	5.2	28.6	3.0
Blue on white	0	0	0	0.2
Opaque dark blue	0	0	0	0.2
Transparent dark blue	14.6	0.8	0	0.8
Black	10.9	0.4	0	0
Orange	0	0	0	0
Other beads [*]	28.9	21.7	39.4	48.8

⁵ * the bead types in the category of other beads differ between the assemblages

** from Kirkman (1974)

*** from Kinnahan (2000)

**** from DeCorse et al (2003)

The beads from the excavation in Olanta do not appear to reflect the availability of glass trade beads, either world-wide or on the Swahili coast. The most common types are blue-green drawn beads, Indian red on green and red on white beads. However, drawn blue-green beads are rare at Fort Jesus, in Senegal and in the later time periods in South Africa. In addition, drawn white beads comprise more than 20% of the beads at Fort Jesus and Senegal and over 50% of the beads in the late 19th century in South Africa, but are present in frequencies of less than 10% in the Olanta excavation. Another difference is the lack of black and transparent dark blue beads in the excavation, surprising as transparent dark blue beads is the most common type at Fort Jesus. Thus, either the beads were obtained from a different source or the beads reflect the preferences of the Konso. The latter appears more likely as the assemblage differs from all three African assemblages and it is known that traders elsewhere brought beads that were popular in the areas they traded with (Quimby 1978).

Contemporary use of beads in Konso

Beads are popular in Konso, they are worn by women and children and certain types have cultural and symbolic importance. Beads are used to make necklaces, bracelets, anklets, waist ornaments and rings. Small annular beads are obtained from Addis Ababa, strung by enterprising individuals (often young men) into ornaments frequently in the colors of the Ethiopian flag and sold mainly to tourists (figure 4).



Figure 4. Modern bead work from Konso (from Kimura 2004).

Most of the beads in use in Konso today, though, consist of heirloom beads. They may be inherited from mother to daughter through generations, given as gifts from parents or husbands or purchased. The beads may be strung on wire or thread. The first results in a

rigid, round necklace and the second in a looser necklace that is often folded two or more times. Different types of beads have different value, with the more common types less expensive. Among the most valuable are the dark blue transparent glass beads known as “chimira”. “Indian red on green” (type 7 in figure 2) and drawn blue-green (type 1 in figure 2) beads have intermediate value, whereas white drawn (type 9 in figure 2) and wound blue-green (type 3 in figure 2) beads are among the least valuable. Consequently, both the number and types of beads play a role in determining the value of a particular necklace or other bead work. Shown in figure 5 are necklaces of red on white beads (A), “Indian red on green” beads (B) and drawn blue-green beads (C). These beads are the same types that were found in the excavation in Olanta. Most heirloom necklaces contain more than one bead type, but usually one type of bead predominates and other types consist of one or a couple of beads. The necklace of drawn blue-green beads (C in figure 5) for example has one “Indian red on green” bead and two molded blue beads (indicated by arrows). These types of necklaces are worn by women, who may lend them to brothers for ritual dances.



Figure 5. Heirloom beads.

The anklet (D in figure 5) is made from ostrich eggshell beads, manufactured in Konso, and blue faceted heirloom beads (type 24 in figure 2). This type of anklet is worn by mothers and grandmothers, and needs to be made from ostrich eggshell beads and blue beads, preferably faceted, but drawn blue-green beads can be used. Mothers wear double strands on each ankle and grand-mothers one strand. The number of blue beads indicates whether a woman has both sons and daughters or only sons or daughters. Girls wear strands of beads around their waist and young boys wear a necklace of white beads or Cowrie shells. Men may wear a single large bead, but they usually don't wear bead necklaces. However, one exception is the special necklace shown in figure 6. This type of necklace contains white iridescent beads and the dark blue transparent glass beads known as “chimira”. It may only be worn by men who have high ritual status. One such

necklace can be seen in a photograph of a prominent priest in Hallpike's "The Konso of Ethiopia" (1972:288) and another was worn by a lion killer in a ritual recorded by Poissonnier (2007). The necklace has three strands, perhaps a reflection of the number 3 being associated with males and ritual actions (Hallpike 1972: 273-277).

According to Hallpike (1972:279-282), the Konso have three principal color words, white, black and red, with white also meaning light and black dark. White has connotations with death as well as with providing protection from evil influences. The protective properties may be the reason why young boys wear white bead necklaces. Red has associations with food, namely meat and blood, and is considered a good color, which may be reflected in the popularity of red beads. The Indian red on green bead also has a more direct association with food as it is named for red sorghum. Hallpike (1972:282) believes black to be associated with rain and thus be an auspicious color. Black beads might therefore be expected to be common, but they were not found in the excavation. Hallpike (1972:261), however, mentions that the blue beads that can only be worn by priests are considered black. This color may therefore be restricted to ritual use and expected to be very rarely found in excavations. However, the color associations noted by Hallpike does not explain the popularity of blue-green and blue beads in Konso.

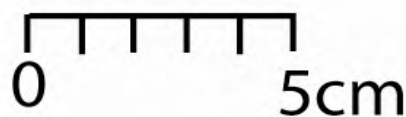


Figure 6. Necklace denoting high status (from Kimura 2004).

Ethnographically known uses and meanings of beads

European traders brought beads to exchange for other items. Kinahan (2000: 93) notes an account of a pastoralist exchanging copper beads for blue glass beads on the Namibian coast in 1793, and although metal and tobacco were the preferred goods to obtain in trade for livestock, beads were also popular among the inhabitants. Sciama (1998) also mentions that beads could be used as counters in trade and that they could be a significant portion of bride wealth. Those practices show that the glass beads had economic value. But beads are also known to have symbolic value. They denote royal status among the Anuaks of Sudan and the Yoruba in Nigeria (Carey 1998, Sciama 1998, Ogundiran 2002). They may also be worn by other high-status men, such as ritual leaders and elders to express ritual powers (Hallpike 1972:261, Ogundiran 2002).

The types of beads a woman wears may differ through her life. As a child she may wear a waist string with beads, as she matures she may start wearing bead necklaces, which increase in number as she grows (Carey 1998). Among the Samburu of Kenya, the bead work on a woman's dress will change when she has children and when those children grow up and when she becomes a grandmother (Carey 1998). Pregnancy is a time of danger and beads either in the form of necklaces, bracelets or anklets, or used as decorations on "pregnancy aprons" have been used to protect the mother and the unborn child (Stine et al 1996, Carey 1998). Young children are also at risk and often protected by bead charms (Stine et al 1996). Stine et al (1996) suggests that in particular blue beads, which are the most common in Afro-American sites, were used as charms. However, they also note that blue beads are likely to have been manufactured in higher numbers than other colors.

Summary and discussion

Beads are heirlooms and most of the types found in the excavation are common in Konso today. In the Olanta excavation there were some changes in bead frequencies between cultural layers, in particular regarding Indian red on green, red on white, and small annular beads, which is likely to reflect the availability of types. Thus the bead type frequencies may be useful chronological markers. The change in frequencies of Indian red on green and red on white beads may be the most reliable difference. Wilmsen (2003) notes that Indian red on green beads were manufactured in the Netherlands since the 17th century and had reached Namibia by the early 18th century, whereas the red on white bead was not introduced to the region until the second half of the 19th century. The Konso assemblage suggests that the Indian red on green bead also reached the Horn of Africa before the red on white bead, although further studies of more sites are necessary for a confirmed chronology.

In Konso as well as elsewhere beads, in addition to being decorative, are used to express wealth and status, and to signal the stage of life of a woman. Some beads may also have protective properties. It is likely that white beads are used to ward off evil in Konso as they are worn by young boys and white is a color that has connotations of protection among the Konso. Red is also an auspicious color and popular in beads. The high proportion of blue-green and light blue beads, on the other hand, may be due to notions of beauty, to availability, or to unknown symbolic properties of this color. Further research into distribution of bead types, both contemporary and historical, and

investigations into the meaning of bead types and colors will aid in understanding the symbolic properties of beads better.

References

- Amborn, Hermann. 1989. 'Agricultural Intensification in the Burji-Konso Cluster.' *Azania* 24:71-83.
- Brain, Jeffrey P. 1979. *Tunica treasure*. Papers of the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology xiv. Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
- Carey, Margret. 1998. 'Gender in African Beadwork: An Overview.' In: *Beads and Beadmakers*, edited by L. D. Sciamia and J. B. Eicher, pp 83-93, Berg, Oxford International Publishers, Ltd, Oxford.
- Chami, Felix. 1999. 'Roman Beads from the Rufiji Delta, Tanzania: First Incontrovertible Archaeological Link with the Periplus.' *Current Anthropology* 40(2):237-241.
- Chittick, H. Neville 1974 *Kilwa an Islamic trading city on the East African coast*. British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi.
- DeCorse, Christopher R., Francois G. Richard, and Ibrahima Thiaw. 2003. 'Toward a Systematic Bead Description System: A View from the Lower Falemme, Senegal.' *Journal of African Archaeology* 1(1):77-109.
- Hallpike, C. R. 1972. *The Konso of Ethiopia a study of the values of a Cushitic people*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Hancock, R. G. V., Aufreiter, S., Kenyon, I., and M. Latta 1999. 'White glass beads from the Auger Site, Southern Ontario, Canada.' *Journal of Archaeological Science* 26(8):907-912.
- Kidd, K. E. and Kidd, M. A. 1970. 'A Classification System for Glass Beads for the Use of Field Archaeologists.' *Canadian Historical Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History* 1: 45-89.
- Kimura, Birgitta K. 2004. *An archaeological Investigation into the History and Socio-Political Organization of Konso, Southern Ethiopia*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Florida, Gainesville.
- Kinahan, J. 2000. *Cattle for beads the archaeology of historical contact and trade on the Namib Coast*. Studies in African archaeology, No 17, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Uppsala.
- Kirkman, James S. 1974. *Fort Jesus a Portuguese fortress on the East African Coast*. Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Ogundiran, Akinwumi. 2002. *Beads, Cowries, and Cultural Translations of the Atlantic Experience in Yorubaland, 1600-1850*. Discussion Papers in the African Humanities, AH Number 36, African Studies Center, Boston University, Boston.
- Quimby, George I. 1978. 'Trade Beads and Sunken Ships. In: *Archaeological essays in honor of Irving B. Rouse*, edited by Dunnell, Robert C. and Edwin S. Hall, pp. 231-246. Mouton, The Hague.
- Poissonnier, Nicole. 2007. *Killing: A Rite of Passage?* Paper presented July 3rd at the XVIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim, Norway.
- Robertshaw, Peter, Bako Rasoarifetra, Marilee Wood, Erik Melchiorre, Rachel S. Popelka-Filkoff, and Michael D. Glascock 2006. 'Chemical Analysis of Glass Beads from Madagascar' *Journal of African Archaeology* 4(1):91-109.

- Sciama, Lidia D. 1998. 'Gender in the Making, Trading and Uses of Beads. An Introductory Essay.' In: *Beads and Beadmakers*, edited by L. D. Sciama and J. B. Eicher, pp 1-45, Berg, Oxford International Publishers, Ltd, Oxford.
- Stine, Linda France, Melanie A Cabak, and Mark D. Groover. 1996. 'Blue Beads as African-American Cultural Symbols'. *Historical Archaeology* 30(3):49-75.
- Van der Sleen, Wicher Gosen Nicholaas. 1980. *A Handbook on Beads*. G. Shumway, York, Pa.
- Watson, Elizabeth. 1997. 'Ritual Leaders and Agricultural resources in Southwestern Ethiopia: 'Poqallas', Land and Labour in Konso.' In *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective Papers of the 13th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, edited by Fukui, K., Kurimoto, E. and M. Shigeta, pp 652-669. Shokado Booksellers, Kyoto, Japan.
- Westphal, E. 1975. *Agricultural systems in Ethiopia*. Center for Agricultural Publishing and Documentation. Haile Sellasie I University, Ethiopia, and the Agricultural University, Wageningen, Netherlands.
- Wilmsen, Edwin N. 2003. 'For Trinkets such as Beads: A Revalorization of Khoisan Labor in Colonial Southern Africa.' In *Sources and Methods in African History*, edited by Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, pp 80-101. University of Rochester Press, Rochester, USA.

Variations in Pottery Making in Southwestern Ethiopia

Morie Kaneko¹

This paper examined the characteristics of Ari pottery making as a CBT by analyzing potters' techniques of body, such as their finger movement patterns. Based on my comparisons among the potters' processes, no common procedures of pottery making exist. The Potters modifying their techniques due to their relationships with other potters By identifying finger movement patterns, it is possible to describe the process of learning, practicing, and creating pottery making, and to compare pottery making throughout southwestern Ethiopia.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Earthenware is often used by the Ari people of southwestern Ethiopia when they cook. Potters, who are predominantly women, make cooking vessels using locally available clay and then distribute the completed products throughout the area. They rarely use tools as advanced as a potter's wheel, and instead craft their pottery using their hands, fingers, and simple tools, such as a piece of gourd. Once the molded pots are dry, the potters fire them in an open field and then sell their pots at the local markets.

In the present study, I focused on the potters' community-based technology (CBT; Shigeta 1996), that is, the use of locally available raw materials to make a specific product (e.g., cooking containers) to be distributed in a certain area, and the creation of tools necessary for a community's daily needs. I theorized that potters use human-material and human-human relationships when crafting and selling their pottery.

During my fieldwork, I paid particular attention to the way potters used body language, more so than spoken language, to hand down their techniques to their daughters. Potters focused on conveying what made their pottery unique.

1.2. Previous Studies

Previous research has examined two topics related to African pottery making. The first study examined craft workers, focusing on the cultural and social aspects of pottery makers (Freeman & Punkhurst 2001). The research in southern Ethiopia studied the marginalization of craft workers by examining the social relationships between craft workers and farmers. Using personal interviews and oral histories, Pankhurst (2001:5–6) investigated craft workers' lives in terms of social, cultural, and economic factors and noted that their marginalization was influenced by the Amhara's conquest in the late 19th century.

The second study examined the techniques of craft workers, focusing on the causal relationship between uniqueness and social value (Herbert 1993). Gossain (2000:202) insisted that a potter's world view influenced her techniques. He examined pottery-

¹ Japan Society for the Promotion of Science/Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University. 46 Shimoadachi, Yoshida, Sakyo, Kyoto, 606-8501, Japan.

making techniques in 102 ethnic groups in sub-Saharan Africa, along with their social norms and cultural taboos. He pointed out that in addition to the natural environment and available resources (e.g., clay, climate, and fuel), social norms and cultural taboos influenced their techniques (Gosslain 1999).

Although the two studies focused on different subjects, they analyzed pottery makers and their methods as a homogenous group. While Gosslain's (1999) research concluded that pottery makers are influenced by their physical surroundings and cultural norms when creating their pottery, he ignored variations in techniques. He also noted how potters pass down their unique techniques to the next generation. Although Pankhurst's (2001) research analyzed craft workers using interviews and oral histories, he only considered common marginalization processes, and generalized the potters' social and cultural situation².

These studies are insightful for examining the social and cultural characteristics that influence craft workers and their techniques, but do not address how potters change and create their techniques by communicating with other potters and those who buy their products.

1.3. Study Objectives

This paper views pottery making in the Ari as a CBT that is learned, practiced, and created via a combination of personal life experiences and one's social relationships with other potters and those who buy their products. This paper concerns Ari potters, who appear not to be influenced by their physical surroundings and cultural norms when making their pottery. This paper contends that these potters are influenced by their social relationships in making their pots. I examined the characteristics of Ari pottery making as a CBT by analyzing potters' techniques of body, such as their finger movement patterns.

I studied 19 potters for a period of 18 months between November 1998 and March 2002. The potters and their families lived in 20 villages, and I mainly stayed in two villages, Village S and Village G, while completing my field research.

2. General Background

2.1. Research Site

The research site was located in southwestern Ethiopia about 700 km southwest of the capital city of Addis Ababa. The population of Ari comprises approximately 110,000 people (Gebre 1995). The residents have settled in the highland zone, ranging in altitude from 1000 to 3000 m. They cultivate an Ethiopian variety of enset³, taro, yams, maize, barley, wheat, and other crops, and have two types of gardens, *tika haami* and *wooni haami*. *Tika haami* is a kitchen garden located near the home. In this garden, the Ari plant several varieties of root crops, coffee trees, and leafy vegetables. *Wooni haami* is a cereal field located near the *tika haami*, with several types of cereals and beans planted there. The Ari harvest cereal crops from *wooni haami* twice a year and root crops from

² Behailu and Data (2001:122) pointed out that the craft workers' group is regarded as one homogenous community by farmers. However, craft workers and their relatives can be divided into numerous communities, such as home village, kindred, and jobs of husbands. Behailu and Data (2001) did not suggest how these differences influence pottery making and the craft workers' livelihoods.

³ Enset looks like a banana. Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) belongs to the family Musaceae of the order Scitamineae. More than 20 percent of Ethiopia's population (over 10 million people) depend on enset for important nutrients (Brandt et al. 1997).

tika haami throughout the year. Harvested crops are cooked in pots made by local potters.

2.2. Pots

The Ari people use at least 50 different kinds of pots for cooking, which are classified into four categories: *tila*, *aksh*, *disti*, and *jebena*. *Tila* pots have a rounded bottom, a rectangular upper part, and a handle. They are used to steam root crops, hold water, and brew alcoholic beverages. *Aksh* pots are used to roast coffee beans and cereals, and bake *injera*. *Disti* pots are used to cook side dishes, and *jebena* are coffee pots.

A typical household owns an average of 12 pots (Kaneko 2006). *Tila* pots are the most common, of which about 20 different kinds are used by the Ari. Housewives identify each kind of *tila* pot by its size, and name each pot based on the ingredients they use in it to cook a particular type of food. For example, when they steam taro potato, *Gabija* in the Ari language, they call the *tila* pot *Gabija til*. Other *tila* pots found in an average kitchen include *agemi til* (enset), *ekena til* (kale), and *pateri til* (maize). *Aksh* and *disti* pots are also named after the ingredients cooked in them.

2.3. Potters

The Ari people belong to either a farmer's group, *kantsa*, or an artisan group, *mana*. People who belong to *mana* have been socially segregated from the *kantsa*, and it is taboo for *kantsa* to marry *mana*. *Kantsa* call pottery makers and their relatives *tila mana* to distinguish them from blacksmiths, *faka mana*. Although pottery makers and blacksmiths belong to the same *mana*, marriage between the two groups is also prohibited. Because most potters' husbands have small fields, they cannot make a living from their agricultural products. Married potters are expected to contribute to their family's livelihood by selling their pots in local markets.

Pottery making consists of four components: digging clay, forming pots, firing pots, and selling them in local markets. Potters are responsible for all four components, but their husbands assist them in each part, except in forming pots. Forming pots is considered women's work, and men believe that grim consequences could occur if they were to assist with that task. When a *tila mana* girl turns six years old, she starts learning how to make pottery, and by the time she is 15 is expected to know how to make every kind of pottery.

3. Stages and Techniques

3.1. Pottery-making Stages

A pottery-maker's posture, the way she holds the pot, and the position of the pot all contribute to her unique technique. They also follow the common stages of forming pots.

Forming *tila* consists of four stages: *bakushi*, *gidibul*, *gochi*, and *galtsi* (Fig. 1). They are derived from verbs in the Ari language that express action. In the first stage, *bakushi*, the pottery maker forms a shallow bowl. In the second stage, *gidibul*, she expands the bottom part into a ball-like shape that is more than double the size of the bowl in *bakushi*. In the third stage, *gochi*, she adds some clay to the surface to form the narrow-necked upper part. In the final stage, *galtsi*, she again adds clay to the surface of the upper part to form the handles. After all the stages have been completed, she dries the pot in the shade of a hut. All pottery makers in Village S followed these four stages.

3.2. *Finger-movement Patterns and Units of Process*

When I started learning pottery making, I began by observing Potter X and watching her hands and finger-movement patterns (FMPs). I then extended my observations from Potter X to 13 other potters in Village S. Each observation session lasted for more than an hour, and I scrutinized the subtle movements of the potter's hands and fingers while they performed each of the four stages for forming *tila*.

These observations revealed combinations of FMPs that were unique to each maker. I distinguished FMPs by the fingers used and the direction of the finger movements (Fig. 2). Using these guidelines, I classified 20 distinct FMPs applied repeatedly to form a *tila*. Potters describe pottery making as *mishikan*, which means "forming pots," a special term used only for pottery making. Although potters do not classify FMPs as I have, if their daughters use the common finger movements and follow the four stages of pot making, they are *mishikan*, which differentiates pottery making from simply playing with clay.

Based on the FMPs of pottery making and the action verbs the potters used to classify them, it is possible to further break down pottery making by using a unit of process (UP). A UP can be defined either as the period of time during which a potter continues to use one FMP or a set of continuous FMPs expressed as action verbs. After I had studied pottery making for three months, I asked a potter about this issue while she was making pots in front of me. I could not find definite expressions for the FMPs (2, 3, 4, 12, and 13). Potters used combinations of several FMPs as action verbs (FMPs 5+6, 5+8+9, 5+9, 6+14, and 6+16). Although they are the same FMPs, they have different names, which are based on the shapes of pots (5-6). Using these definitions, the pottery making process of Potter X consisted of 30 UPs, based on the repeated use of 18 FMPs (Fig. 3).

3.3. *Variations in Pottery Making*

A potter usually works alone, and does not work with neighbors or other family members. One exception is when a daughter is allowed to make pots in the same place as her mother to learn the pottery-making process. In Village S, 13 married potters were born and grew up in different places. When they came to Village S to marry their husbands, it was the first time most of them had used the clay in the village.

When I observed the 13 potters, they used 18 to 19 FMPs repeatedly to form *tila*, and their pottery-making processes consisted of 29 to 33 UPs. Although potters in Village S used the same clay and they all followed the same four stages, six different UPs were applied in their pottery making (Fig. 4). Potters from the same home village use different procedures, and some from the different home village use the same procedures⁴. For example, two potters always follow pattern 1 to make their pots. Four potters follow pattern 3, and four potters follow pattern 6. Pattern 2,4,5 were developed by one potter each.

All six patterns followed the same UP order for stages A and B, but at stages C and D there was considerable variation (Fig. 4). I examined the first half of stage D, which is the pot-making stage that shows one of the most prominent differences in UP order (Fig. 4; note UP orders in the black frame). The procedures of this stage can be explained by the process of forming *tila* and action verbs: potters scratch the surface of

⁴ Although daughters learn how to make pottery from their mother, daughters' UPs for pottery making are different from their mother's UPs (Kaneko 2007).

the pot, put clay on both the surface and inside of the pot, and scratch again the surface and inside of the pot.

In figure 4, four potters in pattern 1,2,4 scratch the surface of the upper part of the pot with bean pods and then put clay on the surface of it. They scratch inside the upper part of the pot with bean pods, and then put clay on the inside. Then they scratch the surface of the upper part and inside the pot with bean pods. The UP order is HGHHM (Fig. 4). Four potters in pattern 3 skipped scratching inside the upper part of the pot with a bean pod (UP H) after they put clay on inside it. One of them is the grandmother's generation, and three of them are married women who have their children. The UP order is HGMH (Fig. 4). Four potters in pattern 6 put clay on the inside the upper part of the pot after they scratch the surface of it with a bean pod. Then they put clay on the surface of it. Following this, she scratches the surface of the upper part of the pot. They use the order HMHH (Figure 4). A potter in pattern 5 scratches the surface of the upper part of the pot with bean pods and then put clay on the surface of it. She skipped putting clay on inside the upper part of the pot (UP M), and she scratches the surface of it with a bean pod in the end of this pottery making (UP H). She uses the order HM (Figure 4).

Although these variations may seem like small, incidental details, they are, in fact, examples of how pottery makers follow their own order of UP. Potters believe that their pots might crack if they do not follow their own UP order. The variations in stages C to D, as shown by 13 potters, suggest that they could make pots without cracks even if they did not follow their own particular order of UP. This was also the case for the nine other villages in which I made observations. Although potters did, on occasion, follow other potters' pottery-making procedures, they were unsuccessful at making pots in this manner, in most cases. Most potters create their own process by trial and error.⁵

4. Conclusions

4.1. Summary

I came to three conclusions. First, Ari pottery makers exhibit 20 FMPs, and they follow four stages in making pots. While I have defined FMPs, potters also assess common FMPs in forming *tila*, but qualify it in different idioms. Second, because each potter develops a different UP to form pots, each UP constitutes the technological unit of forming a functional pot that does not crack. Comparisons of the pottery-making processes of 13 potters in Village S revealed that each UP is an independent unit for completing pots, and potters may exchange or omit a unit, especially in the transition from *gochi* to *galtsi*. Third, each potter follows her own order of UPs to make pots. Her UP procedures not only differ from those of her home village but also from those of her relatives.

Based on my comparisons among the potters' processes, no common procedures of pottery making exist. Each potter experienced several trials and errors while creating her pottery. Due to her life experience, each potter has developed a unique procedure for making pottery. Although a potter practices pottery-making procedures based on techniques unique to her experience, she creates her own variation of pottery making, which is influenced by her life history and social relationships. The Potters modifying their techniques due to their relationships with other potters

⁵ Potters believe that each potter has their own technique. They use the expression *aani* to indicate this. They believe that each potter develops his or her own method because they have different *aani*.

4.2. Comparative Pottery-making Studies

Previous studies have focused on common pottery-making techniques and have tried to relegate homogenous livelihood activities to them. This view overlooks the variation in each potter's process and ignores how that process can change from one generation to another. This study, instead, attempted to understand and identify potters' techniques and to describe the variations in pottery making.

FMPs have no vernacular name, and they may be regarded as arbitrary technological units. However, it is an overly simplistic view to classify FMPs as units defined by an observer and UPs as units defined by potters. Both units are important communication tools to learn, check, and improve pottery making. They are also important communication tools for improving pottery making in the future. FMPs and UPs are based on the "understanding through techniques of body," which is a central tenet of nonverbal communication.

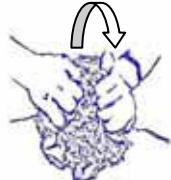
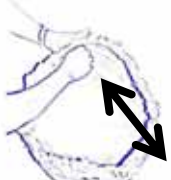
By identifying FMPs and UPs, it is possible to describe the process of learning, practicing, and creating pottery making, and to compare pottery making throughout southwestern Ethiopia.

References

- Bahailu Abebe and Data Dea. 2001. 'Dawro.' In Freeman, Dena and Pankhurst, Alula eds., *Living on the Edge-Marginalized Minorities of Craft workers and Hunters in Southern Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, pp.108-136.
- Brandt, S. A., Spring, A., Hiebsch, C., McCabe, J. T., Endale T., Mulugeta D., Gizachew, W., Gebre, Y., Shigeta, M. and Shiferaw, T. 1997. *The "Tree against Hunger" Enset-Based Agricultural Systems in Ethiopia*. Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement Science.
- Freeman, D and Pankhurst, A (eds.). 2001. *Living on the Edge-Marginalized Minorities of Craft workers and Hunters in Southern Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University.
- Gebre Y. 1995. *The Ari of Southwestern Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University.
- Gosselain, O.P. 1999. 'In Pots We Trust: the Processing of Clay and Symbols in Sub-Saharan Africa.' *Journal of Material Culture* 4(2): 205-230.
- 2000. 'Materializing Identities: An African Perspective.' *Journal of Archaeological method and theory*, Vol.7, No.3: 187-217.
- Herbert, Eugenia W. 1993. *Gender, Iron, and Society*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Kaneko, Morie. 2006. 'Creating new styles for clients: Usage and classification of pots among the Ari, Southwestern Ethiopia.' *Proceedings of Kyoto symposium: Crossing Disciplinary Boundaries and Re-visioning Area Studies*: 237-243.
- 2007. 'Variations in Pottery Making by Ari Potters in Southwestern Ethiopia: Analysis of the Finger Movement Patterns used in Forming Pots.' *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies* Nos.11: 1-15.
- Pankhurst, Alula. 2001. 'Introduction Dimensions and Conceptions of Marginalisation.' In Freeman, Dena and Pankhurst, Alula eds., *Living on the Edge-Marginalized Minorities of Craft workers and Hunters in Southern Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, pp.1-22.
- Shigeta, Masayoshi. 1996. 'Wisdom of Ari: Community-based technology in South Omo.' *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies News letter* No3/4:18-20.s

Shape		The stage (meaning)
A ground		<i>Bakushi</i> (make basic form)
Drying		
B ground		<i>Gidibul</i> (inside, expand)
Drying		
C ground		<i>Gochi</i> (pull the bottom part to form the upper part)
Drying		
D ground		<i>Galtsi</i> (put clay on the surface of a pot)
Drying		

Figure 1. Four stages of pottery making

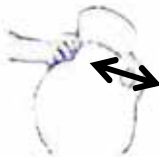
No.	Fingers used	Direction of movement	Picture	Photo
1	five fingers, pad of each finger	From outside to inside (hand: up and down)		
2	Both hands and fingers, pad of each finger	From outside to inside (hands: up and down)		
3	Pad of the thumbs on both hands	Back and forward		
4	Pad of thumbs in both hands • first, second, and third knuckles of four fingers	From outside to inside (hands: clockwise)		
5	Side of the first and second knuckle of the forefingers	Vertical at an angle		
6	Pad of the thumb, side of the first knuckle of the forefingers	Back and forward		
7	Pad of the thumb, pad of the other fingers	From outside to inside (hand: forward and back)		

continue

Figure 2 Finger movement patterns

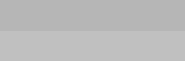
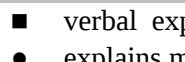
No.	Fingers used	Direction of movement	Picture	Photo
8	Pad of the forefinger and the middle finger	Vertical at an angle		
9	First knuckle of the thumb	Vertical at an angle		
10	Pad of five fingers	From outside to inside (hand: clockwise)		
11	Pad of all ten fingers	From outside to inside (hands: downward)		
12	Pad of the thumb	Up and down		
13	Side of the first and second knuckle of the forefinger and the middle finger	Clockwise		
14	Side of the first and second knuckle of the forefinger and the middle finger	Back and forward		

continue

No.	Fingers used	Direction of movement	Picture	Photo
15	Pad of the thumb, the forefinger, and the middle finger	Back and forward		
16	Pad of the thumb and the forefinger	Turning		
17	First knuckle of the forefinger (the back of one's hand)	Back and forward		
18	Palms of both hands	Back and forward		
19	Side of the first knuckle of the thumb and pad of the forefinger	Clockwise		
20	Pad of all fingers	Clockwise		

Making stage	Order of the FMPs in the pottery making process	Action verb(Ari)	Direct translation	The unit of process
 bakushi	1	<i>tei</i>	taking	A
	2	■	■	B
	3	■	■	C
	4	■	■	D
	5,6	<i>bakushi</i>	making basic form	E
Drying				
<i>qidibul</i>	5,6	<i>qidibul</i>	expand the inside	E
Drying				
 gochi	7	<i>quu</i>	scratching	F
	10	<i>quu</i>	scratching	H
	5,8,9	<i>qaltsi</i>	putting clay on	G
	10	<i>quu</i>	scratching	H
	11	●	●	I
	12	■	■	J
	13	■	■	K
	5,9	<i>gochi</i>	pulling the bottom part	L
	5,6	<i>gochi</i>	pulling the bottom part	E
	10	<i>quu</i>	scratching	H
Drying				
 galtsi	10	<i>qu</i>	scratching	H
	5,8,9	<i>qaltsi</i>	putting clay on	G
	10	<i>quu</i>	scratching	H
	5	<i>qaltsi</i>	putting clay on	M
	10	<i>quu</i>	scratching	H
	11	●	●	I
	6,14	<i>odo/usu</i>	putting/smoothing	N
	9	<i>qaltsi</i>	putting clay on	O
	15	■	■	P
	6,16	<i>odo/usu</i>	putting/smoothing	Q
	17	<i>daala</i>	drawing	R
	20	<i>usu</i>	smoothing	S
	6,14	<i>usu</i>	smoothing	N
	10	<i>quu</i>	scratching	H
Drying				

Figure 3 Pottery making process (potter X, 30UPs, 18FMPs)

-  one after the other
 gradual switch from one FMP to another FMP
 ■ verbal expression not identifiable
 ● explains more than one sentence
 *numbers correspond to the numbers in Figure 2

stage\pattern	1	2	3	4	5	6
A  <i>bakushi</i>	A	A	A	A	A	A
	B	B	B	B	B	B
	C	C	C	C	C	C
	D	D	D	D	D	D
	E	E	E	E	E	E
Drying						
B <i>aidibul</i>	E	E	E	E	E	E
Drying						
C  <i>gochi</i>	F	F	H	H	F	F
	H	G	G	G	G	G
	G	F	H	H	F	F
	H	H	F	F	H	H
	I	G	G	G	G	G
	J	H	F	F	H	H
	K	I	I	I	I	I
	L	J	J	J	J	J
	E	K	K	K	K	K
	H	L	L	L	L	L
		E	E	E	E	E
		H	H	H	H	H
Drying						
The order of UP in the paper	H	H	H	H	H	H
	G	G	G	G	G	M
	H	H	M	H	I	H
	M	M	H	M	N	G
	H	H	I	H	R	H
	I	I	N	I	S	I
	N	N	H	N	O	N
	O	r	r	O	P	O
	P	r'	r'	P	Q	P
	Q	S	S	Q	N	Q
	R	O	O	r	H	r
	S	P	P	r'		r'
	N	Q	Q	S		S
	H	N	N	N		N
		H	H	H		H
Drying						
FMPs	18	19	19	19	18	19
UPs	30	33	33	33	29	33
Numbers of potters who follow the procedure of pottery making	2	1	4	1	1	4

Figure 4 Pottery making process of 13 potter(00'Nov-01'Jun)

 attaching the handle to the pots r: FMP No.18 r':FMP No.19

The Phallsification of the Kallačča: or, Why Sometimes a Cigar Is a Cigar

Hermann Amborn¹

The *kallačča* is a headdress used in ceremonies. Its interpretation by outsiders as a phallic ornament, which has become an unquestioned cliché, is rejected. Inquiries have shown that it is a ritual instrument, able to collect cosmic energies. This is still valid for parts of South Ethiopia. Among converts to book religions it has lost its meaning. They took up the eurocentric cliché using it for their ends: the “penis on the head” sells well among tourists with a taste for the exotic.

The *kallačča*, an object worn on the forehead by certain dignitaries, is one of the most striking traditional symbols among peoples of southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. *Kallačča* is an Oromo word which has entered in similar forms into many South Ethiopian languages (Amarro: *kaalača*, Burji: *kallačči*, Konso: *xallašša*, Dirasha: *hallašša*, Dita: *kaalača*, Dorze: *kaalača*, Dullay: *xallaššo*, Hadiya: *kalačča*, Hamar: *kalaša*).² Friedrich Bieber, an Austrian who visited Kafa at the beginning of the 20th century, saw in its shape a symbolic representation of the “membrum virile” – when he wrote his book (which was published in two volumes in 1920 and 1923) Freudian sexual symbolic interpretation was quite en vogue. Thus the phallus on the head was born. Since then it has become an unquestioned topos among anthropologists that the *kallačča* is a „phallic ornament”. Now, in some places those who are entitled to wear the *kallačča* are men known to have killed enemies. Killing enemies or big game is locally also seen as a prerequisite for fathering children. Consequently, anthropologists and scholars of comparative religion have established a link between killing and procreation. That in turn confirmed the meaning of the *kallačča* as phallic. In my paper I will show that this phallus fixation has prevented scholars from seeing this symbolic item in a broader socio-religious context.

As South Ethiopian societies turn more and more to book religions the *kallačča* is fading into the background. In some places it is only used secretly, while elsewhere it has totally lost its spiritual meaning. But it is in these latter cases, that the *kallačča* has won a new publicity, even though in a completely different sense. The European conception of the phallic headdress has left ethnology books to be adapted by the “modern” natives who took advantage of this, serving the exotic needs of tourists: the “penis on the head” sells well among them.

¹ Prof. (em.) Dr. Hermann Amborn, Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikanistik der LM Universität München, Oettingenstr. 67, D-80538 München.

E-mail: Hermann.Amborn@vka.fak12.uni-muenchen.de.

² Sources see note 8.

The object

Let me first describe this object. Commonly, a *kallačča* is about 10 centimetres long. It consists of a slightly conical cylinder, about 2 centimetres in diameter and in its upper part of a cone that is about 2.5 centimetres long, with a base about 3 centimetres in diameter. Frequently four small elevations can be seen around the upper part. Newly, most of the *kallačča* are cast in aluminium; the older ones are made of non-ferrous alloys (e.g. brass) or silver. The emblem is placed on a yellow-white snail-shell or on ivory, being held upright on the forehead with the aid of a strap. Native smiths produce it by means of the lost-wax process (cf. Amborn 1990: 77). In our days smiths from Konso are famous for casting it.

Local variations of the form are common (cf. Dizi).³ According to Bieber, in Kafa even golden *kallačča* are said to have existed, and they were bigger there than elsewhere (Bieber 1920/I: pp. 300). A special form is the so called „Kafa crown” made of silver sheet which had three cones juxtaposed on a plate sitting on a cylinder (fig. 2).⁴

Among southern Cushitic-speaking societies with the *gadaa*-system (and related systems), the *kallačča* is common, but it is also known in Amarro, Hamar, Hadiya, within some groups of the Gamu highland, and in the former sacred kingdoms of Janjero, Wolayta and the Gonga kingdoms of Kafa, Hinnario and Šeka⁵. However it is unknown among most of the western Ometic peoples. As we know from Bruce and Russell it was formerly also worn in Gondar.⁶ Russell pondered over the meaning of the *kallačča*. He described this „head-dress” as a horn and saw a connection with Jewish symbolism illustrating “the allusion made in the sacred scripture to the horn of the righteous” (Russell 1833: 158).



Fig.1: Burji *ganni* („priest”) with *kallačča* (Photo: H. Straube)

³ Truncated cone, slender pyramid – Dizi: Haberland 1993: pp.169-172, fig. 29b; Bruce 1790, Atlas: pl. 34, 35; Russell 1833: 158.

⁴ Fig 2: „Gaki Šekočo in full royal attire painted by Paul Buffet“. Collection of Ernst Hammerschmidt (Uhlig 2005, vol. 2: 653). In the composition the „crown“ is added to the king’s head. For a critical assessment of this object as a „crown” see Lange (1982: 271f.) who also points to the fact that the most important royal insignia was a golden bracelet.

⁵ Cf. note 8.

⁶ Bruce 1790, Atlas pl. 34, 35.; Russell 1833: 158. Both authors write that this decoration is put on after a successful military campaign. Maybe the recent supporters of the phallus theory saw this as a confirmation of their interpretation.



Fig. 2: Kafa „crown” (see note 4)

Monopolizing meaning

What the Old Testament had been for Russell, Freudian psychoanalytical thinking seems to have been for Franz Bieber. Bieber was the first European to undertake any extensive research in Kafa. This was in the early years of the 20th century, only a few years after its colonization by the Abyssinians. He was really impressed by their „*qaalláačo*”, especially the „Kafa crown”. Bieber, who was Viennese, without doubt had knowledge of the psychoanalytic theses of Sigmund Freud. His reminiscences were written at a time when Freudian sexual symbolism was the latest topic of discussion. That an Austrian researcher believed he had found confirmation of Freud’s theses in Kafa is therefore hardly astonishing. Regarding the *qaalláačo*, he explained that it was „(eine) stilisierte(...) Nachbildung eines erigierten membrum virile“ (a stylised reproduction of an erect membrum virile).⁷ In the ruler’s „crown” he even saw a „dreifachen goldenen Phallus, den Träger des Geschlechtszaubers” (triple golden phallus, moving force of sexual magic) (ibid. II: 66). By rendering vernacular texts he gave the impression of authenticity. But his claims are inconsistent, elsewhere he wrote (ibid. II: 362) that the “Kaffitscho” did not use the *qaalláačo* for love magic or anything else. And in another passage he translates *qaalláačo* as “Kopfstück” (headpiece). In 1964 Kunz Dittmer emphasized the contradictions in Bieber’s explanations and also tried to refute his theses on the basis of form criteria, being not always fortunate with his examples. In the meantime, however, the superficially plausible symbolism had been

⁷ Bieber, e.g., 1920/I: 300, 1923/II: 358.

generally accepted, and Dittmer remained unheard – particularly, because he had fallen out of grace with some of his German colleagues. And outside Germany, in the realm of Anglo-Saxon anthropology, German culture historians did not receive much attention in those years anyway. So Bieber's old hypothesis was left alone and became established as a fixed topos.⁸

Let us start from the assumption that symbols are socially conditioned signs which, in their context of meaning, refer to a particular cultural environment as a whole. This is equally valid for anthropologists and their socialization in Western culture. Anthropologists in the field, living in a foreign place, fall back on the familiar as a basis of comparison. So it is quite understandable that *Western* scholars saw the *kallačča* as a symbol of the phallus. It was Freud (1916/17), who postulated that the symbols of the waking state have their origins in the sexual sphere, continuing in dreams as symbols of genitality. For anthropologists it seemed like the familiar being mirrored in the strange and unfamiliar. At the same time the direct association of the *kallačča* with the penis ascribed to southern Ethiopians elicited, more or less consciously, surprise and displeasure, and even fascination among European researchers. The latter could be pushed away by crediting it to a strange and different way of thinking supposedly rooted in the instinctive (im Triebhaften). Searching for explanations, anthropologists thought they could find them in the connection with fathering and killing.

But alas, the social and religious world of southern Ethiopians differs from that of the West.

Emic voices

It is time to put straight some of the unquestioned conceptions. Above all, it seems important to me that the persons concerned should be heard and taken seriously. Admittedly, as long ago as 1963 Haberland documented Borana statements relating to it, but he would not accept their views on the matter. Rather, he writes that they „ebensowenig wie die anderen Stämme etwas davon wissen, dass der kalača einen Penis darstelle, sondern betonen, dass es mit derart trivialen Dingen nichts zu tun habe, sondern ‚von Gott geschaffen sei‘“ (like other tribes know nothing about the kalača representing a penis, emphasized that it has nothing to do with such trivial things but has been created by God' (1963: 51). Even though Haberland calls it „vornehmstes Stück aller Ritual-Gegenstände“ ([the] most distinguished piece of all ritual objects) (ibid.), he takes it as given that the „kalača“ was „originally the killer's insignia, representing the phallus of the slain enemy“ (p.209).

I want to divide the statements of southern Ethiopians about the *kallačča* into three groups: They are made by, firstly, wearers, secondly, producers, and thirdly, knowing traditionalists. The group of those entitled to wear, consists of persons of a high socio-religious status. Primarily, these are sacral dignitaries connected with the society's

⁸ Sources that saw a connection between *kallačča* and phallus:
Oromo and societies with a generation-grading system: Oromo: Baxter 1978: 167; Haberland 1963: see Index, s.v. „Phallischer Schmuck“; Hinnant 1978: 237 (Guji); Knutsson 1967: pp.88 (Mačča); Leus 1995: s.v. kalaca (Borana) - Konso: Hallpike 1972: pp.149; Jensen 1936: 198, pp. 347, 389 (fig. 119); Tadesse 1992: 20, note 26.; Watson 1998: 201.
 Others: Straube 1963: see Index s.v. „Phallischer Kopfschmuck“ (Amarro); idem: pp. 224 (Dita); idem: 190 (Dorze); Haberland 1993: pp. 169-172 (Dizi); Braukämper 1980: 242, pp. 295 (Hadiya); Lydall and Strecker 1979/II: 59, 74 (Hamar); Jensen 1959: 370 (Tsamakko). - *Former „sacred kingdoms“*: Bieber 1923 I: ch. 37; II: chs. 15, 23; Lange 1982: 271 (Kafa); Lange 1892: 39 (Hinnario), 129 (Šeka); Haberland 1965: 278 (Wolayta); Straube 1963: 337 (Janjero). - *Southern Ethiopia (in comparison)*: Braukämper 2001: 230,232.

ancestors, such as lineage or clan elders who trace their descent directly to the mythic birth of their primal ancestor; furthermore, this category includes important dignitaries of the generation-group systems who carry out religious duties. In some societies, killers of enemies or big game, as I already mentioned, may be entitled to wear the *kallačča*.⁹ We have to come back further below to this special case which, however, was the starting point for the followers of the phallus thesis.

It is worth paying attention to the words of a kalla, one of the two most important religious leaders of the Konso.¹⁰ For the kalla the *xallašša* is a sacred object inherited from the ancestors. He wears it only for particular ritual events. The heritage factor primarily refers to the spiritual power connected with the *xallašša*, whereas the material object itself is of minor importance. So much that it may be reproduced if it gets shabby. In such a case his counselors select a smith of an impeccable way of life, who *must not* be a killer. The new *xallašša* will be consecrated in a sacrificial rite with sheep's blood. When the kalla wears it on his forehead, a direct connection between him and the supernatural world, meaning the ancestors and God, is established. What he then said, was, in his very words: "Nothing is above me, nothing (i. e. no living being) is between me and God." That is why he can pronounce blessings with the help of the *xallašša*, but also curse those who done wrong. Losing a *xallašša* charged with power would mean the loss of all his spiritual potential and would be tantamount to his death. Indeed, back in 1980 I met a ritual leader in Dihina (Dullay region) whose insignia had been destroyed by the *zemacha* shortly after the Revolution. He explained his nervous and odd behaviour to me as the result of losing his mind on account of that awful act. The kalla of Konso vehemently rejected the conception of the *xallašša* as a phallic symbol. Then he laughed about such a foolish idea, stating that „formerly the men went about naked, so what sense would it have made to have another penis and [of all places] wear it on the head. To have two penises might be a dream of the *farenji*." That somebody would conceive of tying something representing a male genital trophy to his forehead, was for him a mistaken idea.

Among the D'iraašša too it is the connection a ritual leader is able to establish between the human sphere and the other world by means of the *xallašša* that matters. When a *d'aama* dies he is „crowned” with a *xallašša*, and when he is brought for interment the Sun (who is associated with God) emits a pencil of rays which are reflected by the *xallašša*. These rays turn into (real) bolts lightning which strike the nearby. So only people with extraordinary spiritual power may dare to be near a dead *d'aama* (Amborn 1990: 330).

About Of the Amarro, who recognize a sky-god (*wonto*) as *deus otiosus* Straube reports that in exceptional events Wonto, via the *kaalača*, can constitute a numinous unit with the *kaati* (“king”) (Straube 1963: 106). Similar statements on the sacral meaning of this emblem can be found all over southern Ethiopia.

I also asked the “impeccable” smiths. I wanted to hear from them, whether they, as artisans who produced the insignia, associated the *kallačča* with a phallus. Wide of the mark! Initially, all I got was laughter. The smiths of Keera opined: “Only stupid people believe in that, Amhara or Farenji, who have no idea of anything.” Then, turning serious, they explained that the *kallačča* was a strong and dangerous thing, and those

⁹ It should be noted that killers usually wear other signs of status (cf. below).

¹⁰ Interviews in December 2000 and January 2003. Dawit Jiraso whose name as a *poqalla* was Kalla died in 2004.

who deliberately told a lie (like equating it with the phallus) when looking at its tip would die shortly afterwards.

The very production process is conceived of as a ritual ensuring the transmission of an ancestral *kallačča*'s power to a newly made one, the artisans acting as mediators. During this time, the smiths cover their workshop with large cotton cloths so that no unauthorized person may observe or disturb what is going inside (Amborn 1990: 324). Something comparable applies to all smiths of the Burji-Konso cluster who, by the way, also provide the Borana and other ethnic groups with the *kallačča*. From the production of wax for the casting mould to the finishing touches, they live in a kind of seclusion, refraining strictly from eating and drinking with others.

Now these statements on the sacred character of the *kallačča* agree fully with those by the third group, that is, persons who know about ritual life. They all see it as powerful sacral instrument which ultimately originates and has its source of power in the supernatural. Be it mentioned that for the Mačča Oromo the *kallačča* is according to Bartels (1983: 146) a gift of God and „a help to maintain social order.”¹¹

Let us briefly consider the interpretation of the *kallačča* as a phallic badge of rank for killers. In these more or less egalitarian societies, a common way for men to gain merit and rise in the ranks was the killing of enemies or dangerous big game¹² As mentioned, some ethnic groups maintained the idea that killing and procreation were linked, which fostered an ethos of virility culminating in the decree to have killed or at least participated in a killing raid before marriage.--- This in turn inspired fantastic ideas among some anthropologists. It was Hallpike who was not only convinced that the Konso *xallašša* symbolized an erect penis, but even saw in it a (penetrating) weapon.¹³ On the contrary, the *xallašša* plays an important role in peace talks among the Gawwada and Gollango, neighbours of the Konso to the west, and also, for example, the Mačča Oromo (Bartels 1983: 239).

The custom of cutting off the penis of the dead enemy which has been reliably reported from several Ethiopian peoples and the honouring of some killers with a *kallačča* gave rise to arguments that the *kallačča* was a symbol of these trophies, and thus necessarily of a phallic nature. But this was an exception – *not* the rule.¹⁴ Killers of

¹¹ Swearing on the *kallačča* occurs frequently. One example only: The Burji have a special „*kallácci*” called *gúwa*, which was used at oath ceremonies. If a dispute could not be settled because there were no witnesses, the contracting parties went to a man who had inherited the *gúwa* from one of his forebears. This type of *kallácci* had the power to kill liars. The plaintiff kept the *gúwa* in a horn in his house until one of the opponents died. The deceased was thought to be the perjured culprit. The surviving opponent then performed a sacrifice and washed the *gúwa* with the blood of the sacrifice” (Amborn and Kellner 1999: sv. *gúwa*).

¹² For a critical view on the „meritorious complex” as a former focus of research in German ethnology cf. Braukämper 2001 passim.

¹³ Hallpike 1972: 149: „... In the symbolism of the *hallasha* we see another aspect of the erect penis, in which it is regarded not only as an instrument of impregnation, but as a weapon. In the ritual the *hallasha* is used in conjunction with the rhinoceros horn ...The penis is therefore associated with the penetrating horn of the rhinoceros, which explains why the *hallasha* is bound on the priest's forehead. [...] As we know rhinoceros horn is widely supposed to be an aphrodisiac, in the case of the *hallasha* an apposite symbolic process takes place, whereby the 'penis' becomes 'horn'.” - The speculative association with the horn of the rhinoceros which is among the insignia of lineage-priests is not convincing. While there is indeed a widespread understanding of the rhino's horn as a means of procuring general (not so much individual) fertility, but there is no evidence for southern Ethiopia that it is an aphrodisiac (as in South and East Asia).

¹⁴ Dittmer (1964: pp. 74) was the first to point out that according to written evidence killers were decorated with the *kallačča* only in exceptional cases and if that, always together with the killing insignia. For the most widely spread killing insignia in southern Ethiopia see Braukämper 2001: 224.

men and beasts permanently wear a bracelet as a sign by which they can be recognized. Killers I questioned thought that the idea of wearing the genital trophy (if only as a model) on the forehead was repulsive. Indeed, tying it (always including the scrotum and a flap of skin) to one's wrist as is usual at sacrificial animal killings is a more frequently found custom. As far as can be concluded from interviews and well ascertained sources, only those killers receive the *kallačča* who already have an eminent status in the society, for instance a specific *gadaa* rank. As a rule, these are persons that are expected to employ their power of blessing on others. But, like other dignitaries, they also only wear the *kallačča* on ritual occasions.

I do not deny that the meaning of the *kallačča* may have varied in time and place. But, since we do not know much about the dynamics that may have transformed symbols along with their socio-religious context resulting in new explanations, it seems to me equally important to acknowledge that in recent times no southern Ethiopian man of knowledge has associated the *kallačča* with the phallus.

What I am interested in this article is the understanding of the topical meaning of the *kallačča* in its practical reference to the indigenous world view.¹⁵ As Wittgenstein (1953: 9, 47; 421) emphasised: It is only "in the use" and "employment" that things, concepts, ideas etc. are filled with meaning and it is in the commonly performed praxis that their social, ritual etc. determination is revealed.¹⁶

This also meant to refer to the fact that scholars neglected the real connections thanks to the definitional power of the west. They saw themselves as interpreters who controlled the expression of a sign, by composing the relation between an object and a sign. With their power and their knowledge, they determined what the real meaning had to be (c.f. Kockelman 2007: pp 379-382).

Meaning reconsidered

Regarding a new interpretation, the following can be said: instead of being a symbol of virility, the *kallačča* might be described as a socio-religious mediator which is able to bundle positive and negative "cosmic" (for want of a better word) energies. It is therefore dangerous, and only qualified persons may handle it. The *kallačča* symbolizes a link between the human and the supernatural world; its function is to open up this connection between different spheres.

Though a critical study of the sources should have given rise to heavy doubts as regards the phallus association, the topos lasted persistently. Some anthropologists, while mentioning the *kallačča*, seem to have used the expression "phallic symbol" as an academically established term without examining its value. Those, however, who took a closer look at the matter, ultimately contented themselves with external observation. They wanted to understand, but they found it difficult to share the indigenous mind's view of reality. As a consequence they kept projecting their own models of thought into the others' thinking, and lack of self-reflection resulted in creating a cliché. Of course, an indigenous explanation or interpretation is not necessarily correct, but it would have been worthwhile to reflect upon it.¹⁷ Referring to the context of killing and fathering

By the way - the *kallačča* does not appear among his examples! Even though he speaks in another context of the "phallic symbol" (ibid: 230, 232).

¹⁵ „Actual“ refers to a period of time an overview of which can be gained through ethnographic research. The possibility that Southern Ethiopians may have used an object which might have had different contents of meaning in another place at another time will not be discussed in the given context.

¹⁶ Citation follows the numbering of sentences in the text.

¹⁷ In this respect the present study can be regarded also (in the widest sense) as part of an emic/etic

(which exists among some ethnic groups) they came close to the sacral meaning of the *kallačča*, but the phallus they had in mind blocked their view on more far-reaching considerations: The false view resulted in a phallsification.

Coming full circle

In the past fifteen years dramatic changes have occurred in the religious domain that also altered social relations and economic standards. Of course there was change before especially in the political and economic realm, but during imperial time and likewise under the Italian occupation and even under the rule of the *Derg*, many societies in the south successfully resisted attempts to influence their world view from *outside*. Thus, for example western missionaries, be it those which were connected with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), the Qale Heywot (former Sudan Interior Mission), or with the Catholic church, had not much success in the area south of Arba Minch (that means south of 6° northern latitude) up to the 1990s.¹⁸ The Ethiopian orthodox church was present in nearly any administrative centre (*katama*), but there it served the northerners who came as foreigners into the south. There was little interest in mission work, apart from occasional, purely formal, if coercive proselytising.¹⁹ The spread of the Islam from the old Islamic centres in Ethiopia into the Southwest was slow also, apart from a short peak during the Italian occupation (Erlich 2007 chapt. 4).

The fall of the *Derg* (1991) initiated a tremendous revival of the Ethiopian orthodox church, and the altered situation encouraged the existing western missions and facilitated the penetration of evangelical movements. If we follow Cressida Marcus as well as Petros Berga, there must have been an interesting development within the orthodox church. According to Marcus (2002: 252) since 1991 “the church is the most popular movement”, but she is aware of the still existing principles of stratification; while Berga (2006: 688) writes: “Thought once an extension of the imperial state the Ethiopian Orthodox Church transformed itself into a grassroots peoples movement...”. Thus the former adverse attitude of the indigenous people in the Southwest toward the religion of their (former) suppressors has been given up. Competing in proselytising the “heathen” with western churches, the Orthodox church has good prospects; they are less rigid towards indigenous religiosity than western churches. Most strict in condemning the religion of the southerners are Pentecostals, but they spread rapidly. By now many congregations of the EECMY in the south are influenced by Evangelicals too, and like all fundamentalists they put pressure on their folk. Members of the church are not allowed to attend any non-Christian ceremony. In Konso they are made to believe that their lineage-heads (*pogalla*) are “dangerous because there were seen to be the leaders of an alternative religion, and therefore Devil worshippers” (Watson 1998: 252). The Protestant fundamentalists even forbid dancing and singing except for the Christian occasions (ibid.). Shako Otto a Konso by birth complains that by this and other means the fundamentalists are undermining personal identity: “On the part of Protestant converts ...violent actions against Konso traditional culture, the culture that has constituted their very social identity and has shaped their personality, is [sic!] frequent” (Shako Otto 2004: 171). In one of his examples he shows how one of the important

discussion. For one of the latest articles on this subject see Strang (2006) where the relation between anthropological concepts and indigenous knowledge is discussed.

¹⁸ For D’iraaſsa: cf. Hansemo 1992; Gravas 1998; for Konso: Shako Otto (2004: 163-165), Phase I and II. (He divides mission activities into three historical phases).

¹⁹ At my first time in Gollango in 1973 there was not a single catholic or protestant. But laughingly people called themselves Christians (meaning orthodox), as they were “all the emperor’s children”.

socio-religious localities of the generation grading system had been willingly spoiled: it “has turned into a beer tavern run by a Protestant pastor” (ibid: 175).

But anyhow, western Christianity attracts people. Still the well-known tool for proselytising in Africa, the combination of effective western medicine with western Christianity fascinates and makes this religion appear as the most powerful, being superior to others, - the Orthodox church included. One must also consider economic factors which cannot be viewed independently of spiritual ones. Particularly among the young generation Protestantism is associated with progress, education, prosperity and modernity (Barga 2006: 690; Watson 1998: 258).

Western missions, being globally acting institutions –which by the way, can also be said of Islam (see below), nurture longings to come into contact with the non-African world. No wonder, that many young people want to throw off their hereditary culture.

In those parts of southern Ethiopia, where the Islamic influence had already been predominant (map, see Braukämper 2002: 184), the religion and its attitude toward other religions have also changed after 1991. Up to that date Islam was more or less tolerant toward other religious beliefs, but now, with the building of many new mosques and schools in Southwest Ethiopia, teachers and scholars from the Middle East, together with NGOs sponsored by Saudi Arabia, are preaching the “true Islam” while condemning the traditional “folk Islam” (Abbink 1998 pp. 119; Erlich 2006: pp 235). In the South particularly the rivalry between the *gadaa* System, with its symbols of social identification, and Islam increased and disturbed the latent socio-political balance between the different groups (c.f. Schlee 1994: pp.983-994). As with the Borana, the *gadaa* system is still vivid in our days further to the north, among the Arsi. But the recent Islamic influence has become obviously strong enough to alter traditions by banning certain insignia. To my knowledge the *kallačča* is not in use anymore, at least openly.²⁰ Under the influence of Islam, according to Braukämper (2002: 175), in Hadiya the old belief system of the *Fandaano* religion no longer exists.

Also in the 1990s, under the new federal order, indigenous officials were appointed at the local centres of power. In principle, this was a good thing. But all these “educated people” received their training in the only way possible, at either state schools where Amharic was the first medium of instruction or at mission schools. Many of them have learned to look down on their own “backward” culture with shame (at best) and disdain. The effect of this change in relations between people and state authorities is that criticism and pressure against deep-rooted cultural conceptions and values now no longer comes from outside but from *inside* the society (Amborn 2002: 93).

Consequently, with such drastic changes, the *kallačča* lost its significance for large parts of the society. After trning to book religions, traditional certainties were eroded. Without its socio-religious context the *kallačča* is no longer an item charged with spiritual power.

Occasionally one can still notice respect for the religios values of the old people, for example, in the words of a Mačča Oromo speaking to Lambert Bartels: „Our fathers had the *kallacha*, we have the cross” (1983: 253).

²⁰ In an amateur video circulating among Arsi migrants in Germany , showing the Arsi *gadaa* transition ceremonies (early in the 21th century), I could not see any person wearing a *kallačča*. Some decades before Haberland (1963: 456, Plate 23,3) reported that one of the insignia of a regional *gadaa* leaders was the *kallačča*.

As to Braukämper (2002: pp.152) the Islamization of the Arsi was a slow process reaching back until the Middle Ages in some regions. “By the beginning of the 1970s Arsiland was almost completely Islamized” (ibid 160).

For many Ethiopians, however, the *kallačča* has become a mere material object and, even worse, meets with disapproval. Christian or Muslim fundamentalists consider it simply devil's work, to be tread on. In 2003, I saw boys playing football with a *kallačča* in the Konso *katama* of Karatti.²¹ A sense of shame regarding their forefathers' values has by now turned into the shameless handling of things that were sacred. If your traditional life design is seen as valueless what should prevent you from selling such an old-fashioned symbol, and the more effective you are with it, the more successful you become in transforming the once-respected values into the symbolism of the world the potential customer lives in. So it happened that the natives who learned English also learned of books in which they could read about themselves – how they had been in the old days. Many an educated Konso who is not very knowledgeable about his own people's tradition, has read Hallpike's monography.²² Thus, anthropological „facts“ trickled over in a way that can be conjectured but is hardly reconstructable.²³ And from the nineties, since tourists find their way to southern Ethiopia, even some “anthropological standards” have found their way into obligatory tourist guides. Thus, an anthropological interpretation which is nothing more than a meagrely substantiated speculation has attained wide distribution and succeeded in dissolving the boundary between religious emblem and phallic symbol, with the unexpected result that, in an act of reversal, tradition has been newly invented by the anthropological reading: the *kallačča* has finally become what Europeans always said it had been. A new generation of Southern Ethiopians, in particular the *katama* population, nowadays are „believers”



themselves and seem to confirm the cliché of yesterday. The story has come full circle.²⁴ In Konso, native tourist guides wishing to lead tourists to *waaka* (memorial statue) sites attract them with the promise of showing them the “totems with a penis on the head”.²⁵ Also the mini-*waaka* which are produced for the tourist market show the *kallačča* unmistakably as a penis, as can be seen from providing it explicitly with the *ostium urethrae externum*. (Fig. 3). After international NGOs and Missions introduced the worldwide commodity culture the *kallačča* became a commodity itself. The myth of the phallic headdress is wonderfully suited to satisfying tourist wishes for exotic souvenirs.

Fig. 3 Mini-*waaka*

²¹ Please note: in the *katama*. At the time, village boys would not have done that.

²² This is also true for many Oromo who get *their* information from Haberland's „Galla Süd-Äthiopiens“.

²³ These days, ethnological terms like „culture“, „clan“, and many others belong to the vocabulary of educated Southern Ethiopians.

²⁴ Griaule's publications on West Africa had similar effects.

²⁵ See for example the „Lonely Planet“ tourist guide. There you can read that in „the famous Konso *waga* ... the ‚hero‘ is usually distinguishable by the phallic ornament worn on the sculptures' forehead.“ (Gordon and Carilet 2003: 206).

Despite of the strict borders which religious fundamentalists draw towards other belief systems, often the attitude toward book religions is far from homogeneous. Due to the competition among different religious groups membership is fluid. During the course of a person's lifetime she or he may convert several times. It happens even that intellectuals tend to revitalize their bond to the religion of their forefathers. This is one reason why, in spite of the changes in modern time, the *kallačča* as a sacred object has not disappeared everywhere. This applies widely to the installation of lineage elders and in some regions to the members of the *gadaa* system.

When the Guji performed their gada transition ceremony in spring 2007, every man who was entitled to own the *kallačča* wore it, and particularly the newly initiated men put it proudly on their forehead (personal communication Tadesse Berisso 2007). At official political events it can be even seen in Addis Ababa: During the opening ceremonies of the Oromiya-parliament the *abba gada* of the Borana always wears his *kallačča* when blessing the attendants. (Godana Biyo Tufa, M.P. and Lemmu Megerssa, M.P., personal communication 2007). Among the Daasaneč the following was observed by Yvan Houtteman in 1996. During the *dimi*, the main rite de passage for girls before marriage, they wear on their forehead an emblem which is called "*kallatč*" and which consists of a funnel-like object like the bottom of a flash-light battery or the narrow neck of a plastic bottle. This emblem, Daasaneč say, refers to the connection of the candidates with *waag* (the supreme being). Obviously the battery and the narrow neck of a bottle are derivations of the metallic *kallačča* (personal communication).

In some regions one may not see a *kallačča* but anyhow the inherited belief system is not yet completely dead. For example, when Burji from different diasporas come together for the all-Burji meetings, the first prayers are performed by their hereditary religious dignitaries in the traditional form, notwithstanding that they may be Christians or Muslims. After that, priests from the other religious communities join in.²⁶ While in 1975 a Burji dignitary still wore a *kallačča* during a sacrifice in the Burji homeland (fig.1), fifteen years later the same man sacrificed a bull at Marsabit, Kenya, without a *kallačča* on his forehead. Possibly, in the diaspora it seemed no longer necessary to put it on as a visible manifestation of the link to the supernatural, or they wanted to avoid misunderstandings among participants alienated from the tradition.²⁷ But this does not mean that the emblem has disappeared, even when it is not shown. Some dignitaries keep it out of the public eye, which is not contradictory to tradition at all (see above). In situations of grave crisis, let's say a drought, the *kallačča* may become important again. And in places where connections to the traditional context have not yet been totally severed, the conduct of people towards this mystical object and the value concepts associated with it are at least ambivalent and depend on the actual situation.

References

- Abbink, Jon. 1998 'An Historical-Anthropological Approach to Islam in Ethiopia: Issues of Identity and Politics.' *Journal of African Cultural*, Vol. 11(2), pp. 109-124
- Amborn, Hermann. 1990 *Differenzierung und Integration, Vergleichende Untersuchungen zu Handwerkern und Spezialisten in südäthiopischen Agrargesellschaften*. München: Trickster.

²⁶ Audio tape by Woche Guyo in Marsabit/Kenya.

²⁷ This was possibly due to the fact that there were mostly Muslims attending that sacrificial ceremony.

- 2002 ‚Concepts in Wood and Stone. Socio-religious Monuments of the Konso of Southern Ethiopia.‘ *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Vol. 127, pp. 77-101.
- Amborn, Hermann and Alexander Kellner. 1999 ‚Burji Vocabulary of Cultural Items. An Insight in Burji Culture. Based on Field Notes of Helmut Straube.‘ *AAP* Vol. 58, pp. 5-67.
- Bartels, Lambert. 1983 *Oromo Religion. Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia. An Attempt to Understand* (Coll. Inst. Anthropos 8). Berlin: Reimer.
- Baxter, P. T. W. 1978 Boran Age-Sets and Generation-Sets: *Gada*, a Puzzle or a Maze? In: Baxter, P. T. W. and U. Almagor. *Age, Generation and Time*. London: Hurst, pp.151-182.
- Berga, Petros. 2006 ‚Remapping Religion in Ethiopia: Shifting Religious Identities in an Interactive, Globalized Federal Setting.‘ In: *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp.687-694.
- Bieber, Friedrich. 1920/1923 *Kaffa, ein altkuschitisches Volkstum in Inner-Afrika*. (Vol.1) Münster, (Vol. 2) Wien: Anthropos.
- Braukämper, Ulrich. 1980 *Die Geschichte der Hadiya Süd-Äthiopiens. Von den Anfängen bis zur Revolution 1974*. Wiesbaden: Steiner
- 2001 ‚Der „Verdienstfest-Komplex“: Rückblick auf einen Forschungsschwerpunkt der deutschen Ethnologie.‘ *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* Vol. 126, pp. 209-236.
- 2002 *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia. Collected Essays*. Münster et al.: Lit.
- Bruce, James. 1790 *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile* (Atlas). Edinburgh.
- Dittmer, Kunz. 1964 ‚Zur Herkunft und Bedeutung der altyorubischen Kronen und des äthiopischen kalatscha‘. In: Haberland, E. et al. *Festschrift für Ad. E. Jensen*. Vol. 1, pp. 63-90. München: Renner.
- Erlich, Haggai. 2006 The Saudis and Ethiopia – Which Islam In: *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 233-241.
- 2007 Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia <<http://www.historyschool.tau.ac.il>> [27. 10. 2007]
- Freud, Sigmund. 1916/17 *Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*. Leipzig, Wien: Heller.
- Gravas, Hans A. 1998 *Penetrating the Territory of D’amma: Emic Perspectives on the Intercultural Encounters and the Emergence of an Indigenous Church among the D’irasha (Gidole) of Southwestern Ethiopia*. Ann Arbor: UMI Dissertation Services.
- Gordon, Francis L. and Jean Bernard Carillet. 2003 *Ethiopia and Eritrea*. 2nd ed. Melbourne et al.: Lonely Planet.
- Haberland, Eike. 1963 *Galla Süd-Äthiopiens*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- 1965 *Untersuchungen zum Äthiopischen Königtum*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- 1993 *Hierarchie und Kaste. Zur Geschichte und politischen Struktur der Dizi in Südwest-Äthiopien*. Stuttgart: Steiner.
- Hallpike, Christopher R. 1972 *The Konso of Ethiopia. A Study of the Values of a Cushitic People*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Hansemo Hamela. 1992 *D’irasha (Gidole): The Response to Social and Religious Change of a Community in Southwest Etiopia*. (ms, MA thesis). Manchester.

- Hinnant, John. 1978 'The Guji: Gada as a Ritual System.' In: Baxter, P. T. W. and U. Almagor. *Age, Generation and Time*. London: Hurst, pp. 207-243.
- Jensen, Adolf E. 1936 *Im Lande des Gada. Wanderungen zwischen Volkstrümmern Süd-Abessiniens*. Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder.
- Jensen, Adolf E. (ed.) 1959 *Altvölker Süd-Äthiopiens (mit Beiträgen von Eike Haberland, Ad. E. Jensen, Elisabeth Pauli und W. Schulz-Weidner)*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Knutsson, Karl Eric. 1967 *Authority and Change. A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia* (Etnologista Studier 29). Göteborg: Elanders.
- Kockelman, Paul. 2007 'Agency: The Relation between Meaning, Power and Knowledge.' *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 48 (3), pp. 375- 401.
- Lange, Werner, J. 1982 *History of the Southern Gonga (Southwestern Ethiopia)*. Wiesbaden: Steiner.
- Leus, Ton. 1995 *Borana Dictionary. A Borana Book for the Study of Language and Culture*. Schijndel.
- Lydall, Jane and Ivo Strecker. 1979 *The Hamar of Southern Ethiopia. Vol.2: Baldembe Explains*. Hohenschäftlarn: Renner.
- Marcus, Cressida. 2002 'Imperial Nostalgia: Christian Restauration and Civic Decay in Gondar' In: Wendy James et al. *Remapping Ethiopia*, Oxford et al.: James Currey, pp. 239-256.
- Russell, Michael. 1833 *Nubia and Abyssinia. Comprehending their Civil History, Antiquities, Arts, Religion, Literature and Natural History*. 2nd ed. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.
- Schlee, Günther. 1994 'Islam and the Gada System as Conflict-Shaping Forces in Southern Oromia.' In: *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Lawrenceville NJ: Red Sea Press, Vol. 2, pp. 975-997.
- Shako Otto. 2004 'Traditional Konso Culture and the Missionary Impact'. *Annales d'Ethiopie*. Vol. 20, pp. 149-180.
- Straube, Helmut. 1963 *Westkuschitische Völker Süd-Äthiopiens*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Strang, Veronica. 2006 'A Happy Coincidence? Symbiosis and Synthesis in Anthropological and Indigenous Knowledges.' *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 47, pp. 981-1008 (with CA comments).
- Tadesse Wolde. 1992 *The Death and Burial of Kalla Qänazmach Kayoté. A Ritual Leader of the Konso People of Southern Ethiopia. Sociology Ethnology Bulletin*. Vol.1 (2), pp.12-21.
- Uhlig, Siegbert (ed.). 2005 *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*. Vol. 2, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Watson, Elizabeth. 1998 *Ground Truths: Land and Power in Konso, Ethiopia*. Dissertation. Department of Geography, University of Cambridge.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953 *Philosophical Investigations* (tr.: G. E. M. Anscombe). Oxford: Blackwell.

A History of Sport in Ethiopia

Solomon Addis Getahun¹

This paper studies sport, in this case soccer, and its role in the lives of Ethiopians, at home and abroad, especially in the U.S. This paper also elucidates how ethnic, regional and generational differences among Ethiopians affected soccer in Ethiopia and among Ethiopians in America. Since the 1950s, more than 100,000 Ethiopian's have immigrated to the United States. Every year, on July 4th weekend, Ethiopian immigrants and refugees have hosted a soccer tournament in one of the American cities. This tradition has been in force since 1984.

It is indeed difficult to describe games, public events and entertainments of pre-colonial Africa as "leisure" or "pastime" for it implies pre-conditions set by labor-capital relations, which, however, did not exist in Africa prior to the imposition of colonial rule and capitalism.² It is, therefore, prudent to examine Ethiopian/African pastimes outside of the "free" and "non-free" time frame. In Africa in general, and in Ethiopia in particular, there were and still are indigenous variables that defined and controlled space, time and the nature of games, public events and entertainments that were conducted. For instance until the 1974 revolution, Ethiopians were strictly obliged to honor the many saints and holidays of the Ethiopian Orthodox church which was highly influenced by Judaism and incorporated many Judaic practices. Due to this, it was on market days than holidays that many of the outdoor games and entertainments were held. The choice of market days also entails convenience. In those days people—who were also participants as well as spectators—from near and far—gathered on market days to exchange commodities, information, witness litigation, socialize with friends and relatives, elope with the future wife/husband, have drinks or pick fights. Here, one might also factor in the absence of a sophisticated means of communication that could summon large congregations as markets do in Africa. Therefore, markets were and to some degree still are the public spaces, the public square.

Seasons are other variables that determine the types of games played and the times they were organized. A closer look at Ethiopia's holidays attests this. Almost all outdoor games, wedding ceremonies and major holidays (ቅዱስ ዮሀንስ (ኢንቁጣጣሽ) New Year, ሞስቀፍ Finding of the True Cross, ገና Christmas, ጥምቀት Epiphany, ትንሳኤ Easter) were/are held after the rainy season (May-September), especially between December-January and March-April. The latter are also seasons of plenty where harvesting is over and the ጎተራ (*gotera*), silo, is full. This season was not only a time of celebration but also of war.

Within the context of the aforementioned variables, peoples of pre-twentieth century Ethiopia had various ways by which they entertained themselves. These "pastimes"

¹ Central Michigan University, Department of History, 231 Powers Hall, Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859

² For problems associated with defining leisure in Africa and the role of capitalism and colonialism in effecting and redefining entertainment in Africa, See; Emmanuel Akyeampong and Charles Ambler, "Leisure in African History: An Introduction," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 35, No., 1 (2002), pp.1-16.

include but are not limited to ፈረስ ጉግሥ (*feres gugis*, horse racing), ዱላ-ሞክቶሽ (*dula-miktosh*, somewhat similar to fencing), ግብግብ (*gibigb*, wrestling), ዋና (*wana*, swimming), ገና (*gena*, hokey), ሠንጠረዥ (*senterej*, Ethiopian chess), and ገበጌ (*gebta*, Mancala). Except for *senterej* and *gebta* which are board games where one's ability as a tactician and strategist are tested, the rest of the games are physically demanding and require a fine skill and agility to partake in them. *Senterej* and *Gebta* have another unique aspect in that both were played only among peers that entail the same class, gender and age difference and affiliation.

The origin of Ethiopian chess is attributed to Persia and the Ethiopian name for the game, *sentreji*, is a corrupted word from the Persian, *Chatranji*. Historical records indicated that Emperor Libna Dingel (1508-1540) was an avid player of *sentreji* and that the game was popular among the Ethiopian nobility and the upper class.³ *Gebeta* can be played by simply digging two or three rows of six holes in the ground or on a board made of wood, stone or other materials. The upper class was noted for using intricately designed wooden boards to play *gebeta*. The game, though very ancient and played throughout Ethiopia, was avoided by the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox sect during the fast of the Blessed Virgin, ፍልሰታ (*Filseta*), and on Good Friday.⁴

From among the remainder of the games, *gena*, as its name implies, is a game played during Christmas. It is one of the oldest and most popular outdoor sports, predating the introduction of Christianity into Ethiopia. Some trace the name of the game, *gena*, to the Geez word, *ge'na*, which in turn was allegedly derived from the Greek word, *genos*, meaning birth. Legend has it that shepherds were playing *gena* when angels announced the birth of Christ. Thus, it is always played during Christmas season to commemorate the event. Another Ethiopian legend, however, associates *gena* with the beheading of John the Baptist. The ቁር (*Qur*), sometimes also referred to as ሩር (*rur*), which is made of ball shaped solid wood, symbolizing John's head, with which his executioners played.⁵ Because of its religious background and annual appearance, the game was played by anyone who was interested regardless of class—hence the adage, በገና ጨዋታ አይቆጡም ገታ (*begana chewata ayqotum geta*): “The master will not get angry in a game of *gena* [if he was mistakenly hit].”

The rest of the games such as *feres gugis*, *dula-miktosh*, and *gibigb* are, more or less, related to and reflections of the warrior traditions of Ethiopians. All involve the skillful handling of weapons such as ዱላ (*dula*, stick), ጎራዱ (*gorade*, sword), ጦር (*tor*, spear) that also include hand-to-hand combat, for which pre-Italian occupation Ethiopian warriors were noted for.⁶ Except for *feres-gugis*, we do not have written records of the aforementioned games. The latter, however, appears to be the most favorite sport among Ethiopians. As Richard Pankhurst noted “raiding ability and prowess on a horseback

³ Sylvia Pankhurst, “A Note on Ethiopian Chess,” *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. V, No. 1 (1961), pp. 94-96

⁴ Richard Pankhurst, “Gabata and Related Board-Games of Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa,” *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. XIV, No. 3 (1970), pp.154-206.

⁵ Leah Nienderstadt, “Of Kings and Cohorts: The Game of Genna in Ethiopian Popular Painting,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (March 2002), pp. 57-71; For the game of *gena* and the *gena* festival as depicted in some of the Ethiopian paintings, see R.K.P.P., “Ethiopian Christmas Cards” *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (1967), pp. 19-30

⁶ In the 1980s, I watched *dula-miktosh* in Chilga (Gondar province) and in Chanco, a few hundred miles northwest of Addis Ababa (Shoa province). In the latter instance, so much harm was done as the result of the exercise and probably fearing the potential use of the *dula* by counter-revolutionaries and the *Shifta* (bandits), the officials of the *Derg* regime (1974-1991) forbade the locals from bringing *dula* to the market of Chanco. If anyone was found carrying a stick, he was “disarmed” before entering the market. For pre-20th century Ethiopian military, See Richard Pankhurst, “The Ethiopian Army of Former Times,” *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (1963), pp. 118-142.

have been traditionally rated by an essentially warrior people as among the highest of manly virtues, and some of the most daring and highly honored acts of sportsmanship were carried out on a horseback, rulers and important personalities being indeed frequently referred to by the names of their horses."⁷

However, at the turn of the twentieth century the introduction of modern and rapid firing weapons and western military tactics into Ethiopia slowly subdued these traditional "war-games." They also increasingly ceased to serve as standard measures of manhood, **ወንድነት** (*wendinet*). The establishment of Western modeled schools in the imperial capital, Addis Ababa, and in some of the regional capitals, and where European and other expatriates served as instructors, the traditional "pastimes" were absent from the curriculum. Instead, a curriculum of physical education, **ኦስፖርት/ጅምናስቲክስ** (*esport/jimnastics*), as the corrupted and borrowed words signify, was introduced; and the late emperor Haile Sillassie was noted for hosting "the festival of all schools" in which school children from Addis Ababa and the surrounding areas come and exhibit their gymnastic skills, once a year during Christmas.⁸

The Introduction of Football in Ethiopia

Football, **ኦፍሲስ**, was among the newly acquired "pastimes" in twentieth century Ethiopia. Unlike the rest of Africa where football was imposed with colonial rule, the history of football in Ethiopia is different. It was the victory of Emperor Menelik II (r. 1889-1913) against the Italian invaders at Adwa in 1896 that brought football into Ethiopia. The defeat of the Italians convinced the rest of Europe to acknowledge Ethiopia's independence and send emissaries to seek favors from the Emperor. It was these European diplomats and their dependents who introduced football into Ethiopia. The first football game was held between these foreigners in Addis Ababa in 1924. Though there were indications that football clubs existed at the Teferi Mekonnen School as early as 1927, the participants remained foreigners such as Armenians and Greeks, who had been granted refugee status by Ethiopia.* In one of the "international" football games held in Addis Ababa in 1935, the Ethiopian team, primarily comprised of European refugees and asylum seekers, beat the French team (members of the French Navy from Djibouti) 3-1. Yervant Abraham, an Armenian, scored all three goals. In that same year an Ethiopian football club, St. George was established with Ydneqatchew Tessema, as one of the founding members, who is regarded as the father of Ethiopian football.

During the Italian occupation of Ethiopia (1936-1941), in accordance with the Fascist racial policy, Ethiopians were barred from playing football with Europeans. A separate sport office for the natives, "Sport Office for the Indigenous," was set up and the already established Ethiopian football clubs were renamed: St. George became *Littorio Wube*, Qebana team became *Villa Italia*, Sidist Killo renamed *Piazza Roma* and Gulele named *Consolata*. The irony was that on the immediate aftermath of the Italian defeat, a football match was held between an all-Ethiopian team, expatriate teams and an Italian football team, *Fortitudo*, in Addis Ababa in 1942. The Ethiopian team St. George faced the Italians. The latter was defeated at the football field as well.

⁷ Richard Pankhurst, "The Horsemanship of Old-time Ethiopia," *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. XIII, No. 1 (1970), p.2 (2-7)

⁸ Sylvia Pankhurst, "The Festival of All Schools," *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. III, No. 1 (1959), p.30. For school curriculum and physical education, see Sylvia Pankhurst, "Education in Ethiopia II—Secondary Education," *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. II, No. 5 (1958), pp. 162-189; Marvin J. Ludwig, "Positive Physical Education," *Ethiopia Observer*, Vol. II, No. 7 (1958), p. 255

Soon after, Ethiopia established the Ethiopian Football Federation in 1943. The budget for the Federation was a mere \$127.00. Since then, the Federation hosted the "Ethiopian Cup," which was contested between football clubs of the Ethiopian armed forces, known as Army, the British Military Mission (BMME), football clubs of Italian stragglers who stayed in Ethiopia after the war, *Polisportiva*, St. George and the Imperial Body Guard football club, Body Guard. The BMME and *Polisportiva* won the 1945 and 1947 Ethiopian Cup finals respectively, while Army dominated the remainder of the 1940s and 1950s.⁹ Given British racist attitude towards Ethiopians and the not so long colonial aspirations of the Italians, these matches must have been arenas where Ethiopian patriotism and nationalism was expressed vis-à-vis colonialism and racism.

With the establishment of the African Nations Cup in 1957, which included Ethiopia, Egypt and the newly independent Sudan, Ethiopian football attained additional momentum. In the 1962 African Nations Cup that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia won beating Egypt 4-2. Since then, though Ethiopia had never won an African Nations Cup, football evolved into one of the most popular pastimes in Ethiopia. Wherever there is an educational establishment such as a university, college or even a high school, there were football clubs were formed; even at Ethiopian military bases, there were football clubs that represented the military. In this regard, the Imperial Ethiopian Armed Forces and Ministry of Education and Fine Arts played a dominant and pioneering role in the development of football in Ethiopia. Parallel with this, one has to note that these were also "modern" institutions through which Western ideas seeped through into much of Africa. Even today, the African armed forces and educational establishments remain relatively modern and well-organized institutions; and in this regard, Ethiopia is not an exception.

In a country where freedom of speech and association is curtailed or does not even exist, football matches provided venues for expressions of discontent. This was particularly true during the era of the *Derg*. The latter, despite its claim of popular support and Marxist rhetoric, the populace, besides other things, regarded the *Derg* as a soldiers' party or government. Hence, the public associated many of the football clubs that were drawn from and represented the army and police such as አሜድላ (Omedla), ሜቻል (Mechal), and ኦርሞጃችን (Ermejachen) as affiliates of the *Derg*. Thus, almost all football matches between one of the civilian clubs and the army/police in the Addis Ababa stadium became symbols of struggle between the civilians and the military, opponents and supporters of the *Derg*. There were times when the defeat of one of the aforementioned football clubs by the civilians such as Buna (ቡና) or St. George would result in army-police violence against the civilian spectators. If one of the army-police teams won the game, then taxi drivers would exhibit their dissatisfaction and protest by refusing their service to the soldiers/police officers while serving only civilians. Civilian-military confrontation at the football stadium was not uncommon in Addis Ababa in particular and in Ethiopia in general during the imperial era. For instance, in 1965 there were several disturbances and fistfights that involved civilians and the military-police teams (Mekuria, Mechal, Omedla). They were readmitted to the football

⁹ "Obituary: Statesman of African Sport," *Olympic Review*, No. 240 (October 1987), p. 510; "History of Ethiopian Soccer," < <http://www.ethiosports.com/History.html> > Accessed April 16, 2007; Tadele Yidnekachew Tessema, *In The World and in the World of Sport*, (Addis Ababa: United Publishers in 1998); "Ydnekachew Tessema," <<http://www.ethiosports.com/Ydnekachew.html>> Accessed April 16, 2007

match in 1975, a year after the seizure of power by the *Derg*. What makes the civil-military confrontations of the 1970s and 1980s unique was its politicization.

Though in most cases, the annual football matches between teams of the provinces and from within the provinces became venues for loyalties that transcended ethnic and religious differences, it also began mirroring ethno-nationalist aspirations. This was so, especially after the rise of secessionist movements in Eritrea in the 1960s. A football match between one of the Eritrean clubs such as the Red Sea (ቀደግህር) or Eritrea Shoe (ኤርትራ ጫማ) and one of the non-Eritrean clubs, most often Ethiopian Navy or one of the clubs of the Second Division Army stationed in Eritrea, became highly political. In such occasions, the audience in the Asmara stadium was roughly divided between supporters of Eritrean secessionism and Ethiopian nationalism, while the football field became the battlefield for competing nationalisms. If the Eritrean clubs scored a goal, the stadium was electrified with Tigregna beats which is always accompanied with a drum and a claps. Supporters of the army or navy, who were mainly drawn from civilian government employees, members of the armed forces and some Eritreans, would chant, አማራሽ (Amaressa), a well-known battle cry of the Ethiopian army.

Despite this, any football match between the Ethiopian national team and another country, whether the national team wins or not, the public supports the team. The Addis Ababa stadium (sometimes the federation also uses the Diredawa stadium) was usually transformed into an arena where one celebrates and observes the depth and bounds of Ethiopian nationalism. Singing patriotic songs, waving the Ethiopian tri-colors, or wearing a bonnet with the tri-colors and coming to the stadium adorned with Ethiopian cultural dresses were and are some of the symbols of expressions of nationalism.

Football and the Re-shaping of Ethiopian Identity in America

Studies of immigrants in America, pre and post-1965, reveal that sport played a tremendous role in the process of adjustment, in the preservation of group identity and the immigrants' culture in America. Sport or athletic associations were one of the first immigrant institutions to be established in the new country.¹⁰

Like immigrants in America, Ethiopians felt alienated, and one of the areas that they thought so was in the domains of recreation and sport. While the most popular American pastimes are baseball, American football and basketball, Ethiopians only had knowledge of basketball. In fact, not only do they have difficulty in understanding these games, they often confuse American football for soccer; and get disappointed when they discover that football is not really football the way they knew it back home. To overcome this sense of isolation and thereby carve their own social and cultural space within American society, Ethiopians established the Ethiopian Sports Federation in North America (ESFNA) sometime in 1984. When begun, the Federation had only four

¹⁰ See Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973); John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Steven W. Pope, "Ethnicity and Race in North American Sport," *Sporting Traditions*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May 1995), pp. 99-106; Gary Ross Marmino, "The Playing Fields of St. Louis: Italian Immigrants and Sports, 1925-1941," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Summer 1982), pp. 5-19; Gerald R. Gems, "The Prep Bowl: Football and the Religious Acculturation in Chicago, 1927-1963," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Fall 1996), pp. 248-302; Samuel O. Regalado, "Sport and Community in California's Japanese American 'Yamato Colony,' 1930-1945," *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 130-143; Steven A. Riess, "Professional Baseball and Social Mobility," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Autumn 1980), pp. 235-250

clubs from Houston, Dallas, Atlanta and Washington D.C.; and the attendance was no more than a couple hundred.¹¹

By establishing their own federation, Ethiopians were able to use sports, like every other immigrant in America, as “a point of solidarity . . . in an alien environment.”¹² The bylaws of the Federation, Article 3.1 and Article 3.7, state the principle: “. . . to promote Ethiopian culture in North America . . . [and] to establish close relationship with Ethiopian community and other organizations of similar objectives and interest.”¹³

The Federation's choice of the 4th of July weekend for hosting the event seems to entail more than convenience. By honoring the 4th of July, it appears, Ethiopians were expressing their appreciation for the opportunity accorded to them by the host society. It can be also a statement indicating that Ethiopians in America, most of whom are political refugees and exiles, also cherish freedom and value the sacrifices made to attain and protect this freedom. It might also mean that by hosting their event on that day, Ethiopians are expressing their enthusiasm and willingness to be a part of the new home while retaining something of their own, football, which is barely an American sport. Football, compared to baseball, American football and basketball, is the less favored game in America. In fact, until the 1990s, one can safely say that it had never been an American sport.¹⁴ Hence, Ethiopians have used football as “a vehicle, in many different ways, for the construction of individual, group and national identities”¹⁵ in America.

The event has become an annual occasion in which Ethiopians display and share their rich cultural tradition with Americans, and pass it on to the second generation Ethiopians, the Ethiopian-Americans. The tournament also maintains the bond between the Ethiopian communities in America and the country of origin. Since its inception, the Federation has brought guests of honor from Ethiopia as keynote speakers at the event. The guests of honor have included well-known Ethiopians such as former players of the Ethiopian National Soccer team, famous Ethiopian long distance runners, playwrights, performers etc. Bringing prominent Ethiopians as keynote speakers in the tournament was also intended, besides maintaining the bridge between Ethiopia and America, as a way to provide role models for the young generation Ethiopian-Americans generation so that the latter could emulate; and be proud of their Ethiopian heritage.¹⁶

¹¹ Wondimu Elias, “Interview: ESFNA President Shemelis Assefa,” *Ethiopian Review*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (June 1996), 20.

¹² Elliott J. Gordon, “Sports Through the Nineteenth Century,” in S. W. Pope, ed., *The New American Sport History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 47, 33-57.

¹³ See Article 3.1 and 3.7 of the Bylaws of the Ethiopian Sports Federation in North America, January 1993 and January 2000 Revision. (Mimeographed).

¹⁴ James Deacon, “Soccer Comes to America: The World Cup Begins this Week in the Sport's Final Frontier,” *Maclean's*, Vol. 107, (Je 20, 1994), pp. 40-42. For the history and significance of baseball and football in America, see the collections of works S. W. Pope, ed., *The New American Sport History: Recent Approaches and Perspectives* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Mike Cronin and David Mayall, “Sport and Ethnicity: Some Introductory Remarks,” in Mike Cronin and David Mayall, ed., *Sporting Nationalism: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration and Assimilation* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1998), 1-2.

¹⁶ So far, ESFNA had brought the following prominent Ethiopians as keynote speakers: Dr Aklilu Habte (1985), Mengistu Worku (1986), Tesfaye Seyoum (1987), Ydinekachew Tessema (represented by his son, Taddele Yidnekachew) (1988), Mamo Wolde (1989), Adamu Alemu (1990), Getachew Abebe (Dulla) (1991), Luciano Vassalo and Italo Vassalo (1992), Derartu Tullu/ Kebede Metaferia (1993), Awad Mohammed/Lauret Tsegaye Gebre Medhin (1994), Getachew Wolde/Kagnaw Kitachew (1995), Taddesse G/Medhin (1996), Miruts Yifter (1997), Fekade Multeta (1998), Prof. Asrat Woldeyes/represented by his family (1999), Negusse Gebre (2000), Germaw Zergaw/Zewde Samuel (2001), Wami Biratu/Asrat Haile (2002), Engdawork Tariku (Sebeta) and Teka Gebratsadik (2003)

It became a ritual among Ethiopians to attend the soccer tournament every year during the 4th of July weekend in one of the American cities.¹⁷ During this time, although soccer dominated the events, other games and cultural festivals were also held, often depending upon the resourcefulness of the host city Ethiopians. For instance, the 1993 host of the game, Waila, the San Francisco team, for the first time included children's short distance run, women's 800 meter race and a 1500 meter contest for men. Not only this, it also introduced a "Miss Ethiopia Beauty Contest" and a theatre, የጭገላ ሽርሽር (*Yechagula Shirshir*, the Excursion of the Honeymooners) and other plays. The Federation also pledged to financially help the dismissed Addis Ababa University professors and orphans in Ethiopia.¹⁸

The annual soccer tournament therefore, has transformed itself to become more than a mere event in which Ethiopian soccer teams compete against each other. It has become a scene of competing cultures where hotdogs and burgers vie against Ethiopian *kitfo* and *gored-gored* or complement each other—a reflection of the emergence of dual identities. It is also here that one observes the process of transformation in business transactions among Ethiopian immigrants in America. Price bargaining, the traditional Ethiopian way, and fixed prices, the American style, are witnessed. The tournament is a place where Ethiopian identity is negotiated, recreated and modified.¹⁹

The items sold, in addition to food and beverages (both Ethiopian and American), include video and audio tapes and CDs, articles of clothing with clever Ethiopian quips, books, magazines, souvenirs etc. Almost all merchandise has something of Ethiopia, especially the national flag, or the images of the late Emperor Haile Sillassie. The latter is, most often, carried and sold by Ethiopian-Rastafarians, whose presence indicates an attempt to bridge the cultural gap between being Black and Ethiopian. As the Ethiopian Jewish immigrant experience in Israel indicates, embracing Rastafarianism could be a sign of protest against white domination and racism.²⁰ The whole vista reflects the oriental bazaar combined with the American mall that generating more than \$3 million in a single week.^{21*}

See Dagnachew Bezabeh, "The 1994 Ethiopian Soccer Tournament," *Ethiopian Review* (March 1994), 59; see also ESFNA website <http://www.esfna.org/history/gustsofhonor/>

¹⁷ So far, the following cities had hosted the soccer tournament: Huston (1984), Washington DC (1985), Atlanta (1986), Los Angeles (1987), Washington DC (1988), Dallas (1989), Boston (1990), Seattle (1991), Toronto-Canada (1992), Oakland-CA (1993), Tyson's Corner-VA (1994), San Diego (1995), Largo-MD (1996), Los Angeles (1997), Atlanta (1998), Dallas (1999), San Francisco/San Jose (2000), Toronto-Canada (2001), Hyattsville-MD (2002), Houston (2003), Seattle (2004). See Wondimu, "Interview," 20; ESFNA's website: <http://www.esfna.org/history/tournamentvenues/index.htm>

¹⁸ Fikre Tolossa, "Ethiopian Soccer Games in North America," *Ethiopian Review*, Vol. 3. No. 6, (June 1993), 15, 18, 21.

¹⁹ For the role of sport in either maintaining ethnic and national identity or accelerating assimilation see Roy Hay, "Croatia: Community, Conflict and Culture: The Role of Soccer Clubs in Migrant Identity," in Mike Cronin and David Mayall, ed., *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration and Assimilation* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1998), 49-66; Joseph M. Bradley, "Sport and the Contestation of Cultural and Ethnic Identities in Scottish Society," in Mike Cronin and David Mayall, ed., *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Ethnicity, Immigration and Assimilation* (London: Frank Cass & Co Ltd, 1998), 127-150.

²⁰ Steven Kaplan, "Can the Ethiopian Change His Skin? The Beta Israel (Ethiopian Jews) and Racial Discourse," *African Affairs*, Vol. 98, No. 393. (Oct., 1999), pp. 535-550; Durrenda Ojanuga, "The Ethiopian Jewish Experience as Blacks in Israel," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2. (Dec., 1993), pp. 147-158.

²¹ Fikre Tolossa, "Behind the Soccer Scene," *Ethiopian Review*, (August 1993), pp. 49, 51-52.

* The figure should be taken with caution: Despite a repeated demand and criticism against ESFNA due to its lack of transparency, it did not make its financial dealings public until 2002. Hence, although it does not show the income from all the transactions, it had posted a net profit of \$352,348.14 for 2001;

Ethiopia Day is the climax of the event. Traditional musicians and modern singers, adorned with Ethiopian cultural attire and hairstyles will perform traditional Ethiopian music that reflects the ethno-national composition of the country but none would surpass a song or a dance that contains the word Ethiopia. On that day, the stadium is adorned with the Ethiopian tri-colors and the American flag, an assertion of the new identity, Ethiopian-American.

Ethiopia Day is also a day that Ethiopians in America showcase their might by inviting members of American congress, mayors and governors. The latter will address the spectators and pledge many things to court Ethiopian votes, in their constituents—an indication that Ethiopians, like other Americans, have learned to use their vote while the soccer field was transformed into a political arena where they negotiate.

Aside from being an annual bazaar, the soccer tournament also provides an opportunity for Ethiopian singles to look for potential partners or dates—a phenomenon that is increasingly attracting more of the younger generation and bachelor Ethiopians to the tournament. The issue of finding an Ethiopian partner is very important for Ethiopians of both generations, but for varied reasons. The older generation Ethiopians were impeded due to cultural reasons such as “extreme shyness on the part of ladies, pride, fear of rejection and stage fright on the part of men.”²² Most of them have not accepted the permanency of their residence in America. They have always thought that they will go back one day and thus taking a ፈንጅ (frenj, foreign) spouse to Ethiopia is unthinkable. They also encourage their offspring to marry an Ethiopian hence a reason for the second generation. The other reason is racism. America is a highly race conscious society. In this respect, it is imperative to have a partner from the same cultural background than from an outsider, a non-Ethiopian.

Side by side with the soccer tournament and partying, many political parties and prominent Ethiopians also organize forums and fundraisers and invite Ethiopians to attend. In all these, the Federation is not directly involved. It tries to keep its distance from entanglements with political parties and politically prominent personalities. As the president of EFFNA indicates:

The Federation’s bylaws clearly states that the organization is neither political nor religious. We . . . tried to keep the organization independent of any covert or overt political or religious influences so far . . . Political and religious leaders often challenge our position. Our response has been, and will continue to be, that the Federation is instrumental in bringing a large number of Ethiopians in one location every year and it is up to the various organizational entities to take advantage of this opportunity without having to jostle with us in the stadium.²³

By taking such a stance, the Federation not only has kept its integrity and survival as a nonpartisan organization, but also succeeded, unlike the rest of the Ethiopian community and political organizations in America, in bringing Ethiopians together. As a result, the 4th of July event has become a showpiece of Ethiopian nationalism at its best. The event has evolved to become one of the single most important transactions that brings Ethiopians from all walks of life, age and background. Consequently, the few

\$265,541.96 for 2002; \$262,930.12 for Jan. 1 through April 3, 2003. See its website: <http://www.esfna.org/aboutus/finacialstatement/>

²² Tesfaye Ketsela, “Away From the Soccer Field,” *Ethiopian Review*, Vol. 3. No. 8 (August 1993), 48; for the difficulty surrounding finding an Ethiopian soul mate see Helen Hailu, “The Dating Game,” *Ethiopian Review*, Vol. 4, No. 11 (November 1994), p. 38

²³ Sophia Bekele, “Interview With Berahnu Woldemariam, President of the EFFNA,” *Ethiopian Review*, Vol. 3 No. 9 (September 1993), p. 44.

hundred spectators of the early 1980s; and the three to five day event has grown to become a ten-day event with more than 20,000 spectators, an average of 2000 participants per day. In barely a decade, the participating sport clubs grew from four (4) clubs to 26 teams while more clubs are waiting admittance.²⁴ Since 1998, due to the large number of participating clubs, the Federation has divided the teams, based upon their performances, into two divisions, Division I and II. While Division I has four groups each with four teams, Division II had nine clubs divided into three groups. Inclusion into 1st Division or 2nd Division is not permanent. After each tournament, the teams that performed poorly slide down to the 2nd Division while those teams that proved worthy are promoted to 1st Division.²⁵

Encouraged with its success in the 20 or so years of its existence, the Federation has plans to include other sports events and diversify its participants in the annual event. It plans to host regional tournaments and make the 4th of July weekend a play-off weekend between regional winners. In addition to the soccer tournament, which so far is the main event, the Federation also intends to include track and field, volleyball for women, cultural activities for children and a bicycle race.²⁶ Moreover, to encourage participation in the soccer game and appreciate the players, it has allocated a college scholarship fund, \$2500 for the soccer players. The requirement to receive the Federation's college scholarship fund is that the applicant "must be a good standing player/member of a current ESFNA team . . . must have a 3.2 or above GPA . . . [and] must complete and submit an essay online on how the applicant intends to be part of Ethiopia's development efforts."²⁷ Once selected, the money will be sent to the college where the successful applicant is attending. ESFNA has also allotted a large sum to be used as a matching scholarship fund for deserving young Ethiopian-Americans.

Identity Politics and Football Nationalism: Eritrean vis-à-vis Ethiopian Nationalism & the Annual Football Tournament in America

So far, the Federation has proven to be one of the longest surviving Ethiopian community organizations in America. However, in spite of its efforts to be apolitical, the Federation was/is not immune from the state of affairs that affects the Ethiopian community in America. One such instance, which endangered both clubs and the Federation, was the Eritrean independence in 1993. Prior to the official secession of Eritrea from Ethiopia, many Ethiopian-born Eritreans or Eritrean-born Eritreans were members of one or the other Ethiopian soccer clubs in America. But, after the independence of Eritrea in which most of the Ethiopian-born soccer players were witnessed for voting for Eritrea's independence, some clubs decided to purge the former Ethiopians, now Eritrean nationals, out of their teams while other clubs preferred to disregard this new development, the independence of Eritrea, and continue in the old way.

Nevertheless, member clubs began to increasingly accuse other teams who had Eritrean players for enlisting foreign nationals while teams who took action against their Eritrean teammates were sued by the latter. This divided the Ethiopian community that financed the soccer clubs between accepting and rejecting the Eritreans. What further exacerbated the situation was that while Ethiopians were willing to forgo what they

²⁴ Tesfaye, "Away From," pp. 47-48.

²⁵ Telephone interview with the current Public Relations Officer of ESFNA, May 12, 2004.

²⁶ Wondimu, "Interview," p. 20.

²⁷ Both the criterion and the application forms are available at the ESFNA website: <http://www.esfna.org>

considered Eritrean betrayal and kept on accepting Eritrean players on their teams, the Eritrean teams and their federation, Eritrean Sports Federation in North America, were not willing to reciprocate.* The Eritrean Sport Federation was established in Atlanta in 1986. Its founding soccer clubs were Atlanta, Dallas, Miami, Houston and Orlando. The timing of the establishment of the federation doesn't seem accidental. The Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front guerilla fighters were scoring resounding victories against Ethiopian government forces in Eritrea. It was also on the same year that Issayas Afewoqi made his official visit to America. These events were harbingers of the Eritrean independence of 1991.

Unable to resolve the problem, the Ethiopian clubs brought the subject to ESFNA. The latter, after seriously debating the problem, took the following stance. As the then ESFNA President, Berhanu Woldemariam, stated:

It is clear that most Ethiopians (including many of our members) feel betrayed by what Eritreans have done in choosing to separate from Ethiopia. While they recognize that this is Eritrean prerogative, they feel that independence entails responsibility and as such Eritreans cannot [sic] relinquish their Ethiopian nationality and still insist on taking advantage of abrogated rights while denying Ethiopians similar license . . . Given the complexity of the issue . . . it was agreed that individual clubs may take any such action as they see fit or necessary.²⁸

By empowering clubs to decide on their own, the Federation successfully disentangled itself from political involvement. The Federation's decision also provided the opportunity for teams to decide for themselves, which was also important in that there were Ethiopian soccer clubs that had Eritrean players among them. Had the Federation's decision been to the contrary, it could have offended those Eritreans, (both players and members of the Ethiopian community), who were also proud Ethiopians.

²⁸ Sophia, "Interview," *Ethiopian Review*, Vol. 3, No. 9, (September 1993), p. 46.

* The Eritrean federation was established in Atlanta. What makes the Eritrean soccer tournament different from the Ethiopian is that it is an annual reminder of the declaration of Eritrean independence from Ethiopia and a proclamation of an Eritrean identity in America. The ERSFNA officials always invite Eritrean embassy officials in America to attend and address the opening and closing ceremony of the soccer tournament. So much so the Eritrean opposition is blaming the Federation for being a propaganda instrument of the Eritrean government.

Leaving Asmara – Individual migration projects of Eritrea's 2nd generation of refugees

Magnus Treiber¹

Forced into an open-ended national service since the war against Ethiopia 1998-2000, the young Eritrean generation suffers from poor pay, lawless arbitrariness, war experience, forced labour in a corrupt war economy as well as from general political repression and finds itself blocked from personal development and career. Especially young and educated urbanites choose to leave the country illegally seeking a better life in the first world.

Eritrea's urban *warsay*-generation

When Eritrea's leadership, evolving from the victorious Eritrean People's Liberation Front (Pool 2001), introduced the *agelgulot*, the compulsory national service in 1994, it faced considerable opposition from urban youth. Officially consisting of 6 months of military training and 12 months of work in the country's administration or developmental projects, the national service was meant to train the young generation, male and female between 18 and 40 years, in the defence of the hard won national independence and sovereignty, in the country's development and in the asceticism and hardship of the EPLF's guerrilla life-style. So beyond the practical use of cheap labour the national service program was promoted as an educational mission, teaching the young generation the EPLF's values and duties, placing the national collective above the individual's needs – and life. The young generation, growing up in the last years of the Eritrean independence struggle and later on, was then called *warsay*, meaning "my heir" or "my follower" in the local dominant language Tigrinya, the generation succeeding the ageing generation of EPLF freedom fighters, the so-called *yikealo*, the "all powerful". The central military training centre to be built at Sawa was not more than an empty open field in the beginning, situated somewhere North-West from Agurdar in the Eritrean lowlands. The succeeding rounds of conscripts however were promised to be led to adulthood and interpersonal and interethnic comradeship. After some early resistance and draft dodging most urban youth accepted in fact, more or less voluntarily, their conscription to Sawa as a hard but educational – and personality building – complement to urban leisure life. After the sudden outbreak of the Ethio-Eritrean border war, lasting from 1998 to 2000, the Eritrean government managed quite well to convince young urban citizens of their national duties, but this changed soon afterwards, when the *warsay* – and also still parts of the not yet demobilised *yikealo* – asked for peace time normalization and demobilisation. In 2001 Eritrea's leading clique around Isayas Afewerki did not only decide to crack down on internal dissidents and the private press, but also to silence student protests – exiling some 2,500 students to the coastal desert for forced labour. Less known is an armed, but spontaneous and badly

¹ Dr. Magnus Treiber, Fachgruppe Ethnologie, University of Bayreuth, GWII Universitätsstr. 30, 95440 Bayreuth, Germany, magnus.treiber@uni-bayreuth.de.

planned upheaval of *warsay*-soldiers in Sawa itself. According to one of my informants, who learned about the incident only when he was re-conscripted to Sawa in 2002, the rebellion's leading figures were immediately executed after the loyalist *yikealo* finally won the upper hand again. Thus disillusion among the young Eritrean generation in general prevailed. Being assigned to the capital's bureaucracy is the privilege of relatively few, having enjoyed academic education, all the others are permanently banned to rural army camps throughout the country, suffering from boredom, lawlessness and arbitrariness, and especially women are subject to sexual harassment. Since 2004 just a group of women, reaching the age of 27, and men between 35 and 40 have been officially demobilised, but – to my knowledge – they have not yet been allowed to legally change their job and earn a regular salary instead of their monthly *warsay*-pay of 500 Nakfa or their pre-war salary in case of demobilisation, usually around 1000 Nakfa (100 Nakfa equal approx. 5 Euro). Growing numbers of *warsay* in the field as well as in the capital's or provincial administration in fact help themselves and desert, becoming so-called *koblilom*, erratics. From time to time the military police organises raids during day or night time – so-called *geffa* – to arrest and punish the ones who illegally pour back into the capital's civilian life, enjoying the possibilities of urban life, helping and supporting their families, while getting their support as well – depending on the financial situation.

What in the government's view is a legitimate control and use of its citizens' bodies, minds and workforce (Foucault 1976) – even necessary due to the permanent Ethiopian aggression – urban *warsay* (and to an increasing extent their families, often from educated middle class) consider the main reason to desert, hide in Asmara or to flee abroad. Being hindered to find regularly paid work, found families or to continue further education, being subject to a constant threat of arrest, torture and death instead plants the seeds of subversion deep into the young urbanites minds. The Eritrean government is seen as the main obstacle to a successful life career, attractive to and acceptable for educated urbanites.

Young Asmara urbanites of both sexes, forced into an endless and badly paid national service, remain creative actors with a certain agency in their urban environment. Professional career as well as family planning remain subject to *bricolage* (Agier 2002: 333) under the circumstances of Eritrea's generational policy of material and social homogenisation, allowing however symbolic and moral differentiation and even rivalry in the choice of social milieu and life-style (Bourdieu 1993).

Permanent defence and development of the Eritrean nation are the ideological benchmarks of president Isayas Afewerki's policy. To guarantee its existence the Eritrean state not only subordinates any individual needs and wishes to the overall interests of the nation, but also exerts authority over the bodies of its citizens, including decisions of life or death, in the name of the common good: the nation's security and prosperity (Anderson 1992).

While the previous generation's freedom fighters euphorically believed in a collective solution, leading from war and oppression to peace and development, worthwhile to sacrifice their own youth, health and life, today's young generation is disappointed and disillusioned. Experiencing daily impotence the young generation prefers less ambitious strategies to realise dreams and hopes of a better life, that are considered more realistic instead and feasible by individuals with support of kinsfolk and friends.

Especially young and educated urbanites chose to leave the country illegally despite harsh punishment, including execution. Since 2001 – when my fieldwork on the Eritrean warsay-generation in Asmara started – between 40,000 and 70,000 young Eritreans are estimated to have fled the country, seeking their way through the neighbouring countries and via the Mediterranean Sea to establish a better life in the first world. Out of 14 friends and informants (ten of them male, four female) five are still in Eritrea, preparing their personal emigration in different ways, four of them are either still in Khartoum or arrived already in Italy and four are now living in the United States (Treiber 2007).

I will try to show some exemplary migration trajectories and the change of perception, motivation and identity of more or less successful Eritrean migrants from Asmara to the United States.

A new life in the USA: Zeberga

“I can't tell you how I really missed Munich. I was telling you that I would miss it so much. Compared to DC where everything seems to be hectic, there is too much cultural events in Munich that make life interesting. [...] There are a lot of Eritreans in DC who unfortunately ha[ve] been politically divided into two segments. It is very shameful to see that the differences in political stands ha[ve] been converted into personal hatred. It would be a good topic for sociological analysis. [...] Global regards, [Zeberga]“ (E-Mail fall 2006).

Zeberga, a young man in his late twenties, can be considered a lucky migrant. Still in Asmara he won a full scholarship to complete his Master degree in Munich. With the help and support of his family he was able to pay \$ 1,500 (today already \$ 2000) for being smuggled to Khartoum via Tessenei and Kassala – a nowadays well-established service. While Eritrea does not issue exit visa to its *warsay*, Germany accepts visa holders to fly in from Khartoum. In his transitory one-year stay in Munich Zeberga got used to living alone in a Western country and to pursue a personal and professional life career in a foreign and not always friendly environment. But before being able to miss Munich, Zeberga was even shocked of how quiet and sad people behaved in the street and in the subway in contrast to Asmara's lively bus no. 1.

His master-studies opened up the way to further studies in the USA, his application did not only lead to one of the best reputed universities in the United States, but also to a legal way of immigration and a happy reunion with his fiancée. Ariam belongs to the group of young women, who have been released from the national service in their mid-twenties. These enjoy – in the absence of men – the relative freedom to work in professions such as computer technology and internet administration or to apply for an exit visa. Ariam was able to study in the United States and is a greencard holder today, but „still I wake up in the morning and say to myself, wow, I am in the US“.

However, the United States are not paradise. Unforeseeable problems evolved: As a local welcome ceremony Zeberga got robbed in his first days, which created a deep mistrust into his new environment and home. His scholarship this time does not cover his daily living expenses. While being a student at an élite-university among co-students from the American and international upper classes on the one hand, he is an African immigrant on the other, living in a dark, very simple and still quite expensive basement, even if the landlord, an Eritrean taxi driver, offers a considerable rent reduction. Service jobs consume as much of his time as learning for exams. “They even stole my Sunday here,” he says. While enjoying to meet his fiancée once a week, he does not feel very

content to be financially dependent on her. The knowledge to be privileged and to live a dream, thousands of his age-mates in Eritrea do not even dare to dream, creates social pressure and stress. After Zeberga's illegal emigration his father – a former *yikealo* – has been arrested “back home” (as Eritrea is called here) until a friend of the family declared himself ready to pay a fine of \$ 3,000, doubling the sum Zeberga already needs to pay back. And finally his legal stay is connected to his studies, to stay in the United States he has to apply for political asylum, a Catholic Charity offers an experienced lawyer – for another \$ 750.

“Of course I would do everything again,” he states, “ if you want to change things you have to take the risk.”

Halima & Hussein: Examples of migrant mobility

Halima und Hussein met again in the USA in early 2005 after having been separated for 2 ½ years.

In summer 2002, when her husband Hussein had been – without further information – re-conscripted into the Eritrean army, Halima was able to leave the country via Asmara airport as an official state representative in order to take part in an international youth meeting in the USA. Before departure she made sure that her husband would get informed in Sawa military camp. Nevertheless she tells me in an interview in last April, she made her final decision to stay in the US just shortly before the date of her flight back to Eritrea. From one day to the other her status changed from ‘international representative’ to African immigrant. She started to work as geriatric nurse, assembly line worker (packing electronic calculators), as cashier in an electronics supermarket, gas station attendant, shuttle-bus driver at an international airport and as bank employee. Finally she has got a job in a housing bank in another city, being recommended by a *habesha* friend. Such she has finally been integrated into a large local network of Eritreans, Ethiopians and Somalis who to a large extent form the housing bank's lower staff.

Hussein's way from Eritrea into the US seemed to be more complicated than Halima's or Zeberga's. He deserted from the Eritrean Defence Forces in autumn 2002. To escape from Sawa military training centre he joined a general's convoy by simply wearing an officer's cap. After a farewell visit to his wife's family, who takes care of his and Halima's baby, he guided two American tourists to Tessenei in the Western lowlands – as foreseen the tourists' car was not stopped at the military road blocks – and disappeared there over night with the help of local traffickers. After his arrival in the Sudan he wrote in an e-mail:

“Just to tell u that I safely reached Kassala yesterday night. [...] The trip was successful and smooth. Cheers Hussein”

In the Sudan he was able to work as an interpreter for the UNHCR, but due to increasing repression towards Eritrean refugees and after his room mates got arrested, his wife and a European friend financed a language student visa to Russia. Despite his official papers Russia turned out to be a hostile environment, where Africans have to stick together to prevent racist assaults. Halima today remembers these months as the worst. Often – if after all she was able to get through to him on the phone – he seemed to be drunk and deeply frustrated. During this blockade a Dutch co-worker at the UNHCR in Sudan offered help and invited Hussein to Amsterdam with a Schengen-visa, which Hussein then used to travel on to Sweden to become a political asylum seeker. It took another year however before his wife Halima was finally able to organize

a family reunion. While Halima was feeding the little family – a second child has been born soon – Hussein started from scratch, frustrated from poorly paid jobs he decided to go to school again to become a professional dentist.

Conclusion

Analyzing these exemplary migrant trajectories several propositions can be made:

1. Migration among Eritreans tends to be gender-specific. While Halima's exceptional way out reminds of the disappearance of Eritrea's sportsmen during international championships, urban women have a certain chance to get an official exit visa for marriage or studies abroad as in the case of Ariam. Men are less privileged as they are not relieved from national service. They have to cross the dangerous borders to Sudan or Ethiopia in order to leave the country illegally. Zeberga even had to pick up his German student-visa, which he obtained after getting his scholarship, in Khartoum. Nevertheless there are Eritrean women as well as men among the refugees who drown in the Mediterranean Sea on their way from Libya to Italy or Malta.

2. Migration is structured by a dialectic of mobility and immobility, only to some extent under control of the migrant him- or herself. Halima suffers from her precarious status as African immigrant in the US, partially she left jobs to find something more appropriate in payment and workload, partially she was laid off under flimsy pretexts or simply without any explanation. Among the examples she shows the greatest job mobility, while Hussein's migration is determined by a dynamic geographic and status mobility (Schuster 2005). In Eritrea Hussein was *warsay* and deserter, in the Sudan refugee and official UNHCR-employee, in Russia a language class student, in Europe first tourist, then political asylum seeker, before he became a legal African immigrant to the United States.

3. All four migrants to the United States face criminality, social mistrust and financial constraints. Halima and Zeberga, who both have been defrauded or robbed, learn to rely on *habesha* friends and relatives. Halima says: "I was not expecting 'this heaven thing', but I was expecting that life will be better, that I can work and think independent from pressure from government 'back home'." On the robbery she comments: "[Then] I stopped doing nice things as people take advantage of it sometimes." While Asmara is paradoxically remembered as the location of oppression and brutality as well as a safe and trustful place, where one grew up and knew each other, living abroad demands a new socialisation. When Hussein arrives in the US he writes in an e-mail:

"It feels good, except i found my self a little bit slow in motion [...] taking things slow[er] than my new American wife :)." (E-Mail 02/05)

Halima replies: "What I think is, he feels unchanged, but in 2 1/2 years I have been through a lot of things. Even if you are ready to work it is hard to get jobs. 'Back home' the idea of America is different, I never had big expectations, but I never knew that it is so difficult. [...] I tell Hussein: I have changed not in a bad way, I start say no to things, which I never say 'back home'."

4. The existing Diaspora-networks established during the 1980s by the 1st Eritrean migrant generation – fleeing the *derg*'s Soviet backed offensives but also the internal EPLF-ELF-civil war – do not always offer a warm welcome abroad (Collyer 2005). While the official pro-government communities remain committed to the nationalist dream, refusing newcomers as *keda'at*, as traitors, oppositional parties and fractions often seem to be based more on kinship and ethnic-regional origin than on party

programs. Thus migrants of the second generation have to find access to and re-establish themselves more informal social and economic networks providing jobs and housing – the most important resources to start a new life-career. Individual success considering a professional career, material well-being or the foundation of a family actively and self-confidently reacts to the promised utopia of a national collective's development and prosperity 'back home', which these young and educated Eritreans of urban middleclass decent consider to have failed.

Utopian visions of today have changed: Despite all the problems Eritrean migrants had and still have to face, they know well that they live the lives their age-mates in Asmara dream of. To quote Zeberga once more: "So what – move your ass!"

References

- Agier, Michel. 2002. 'Between war and city. Towards an urban anthrop-ology of refugee camps.' *Ethnography*, Vol. 3 (3), pp. 317-341.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1992. *Long-Distance Nationalism. World Capitalism and the Rise of Identity Politics*. Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Centre for Asian Studies.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1993. *Sozialer Sinn, Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Collyer, Michael. 2005. 'When Do Social Networks Fail to Explain Migration? Accounting for the Movement of Algerian Asylum-Seekers to the UK'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 31 (4), pp. 699-718.
- Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Überwachen und Strafen. Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Pool, David. 2001. *From Guerrilla to Government. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Schuster, Liza. 2005. 'The Continuing Mobility of Migrants in Italy. Shifting between Places and Statuses.' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 31(4), pp. 757-774.
- Treiber, Magnus. 2007. 'Dreaming of a good life – Young urban refugees from Eritrea between refusal of politics and political asylum.' In: Hahn, Hans; Klute, Georg (eds). *Cultures of Migration. African Perspectives*, Berlin: LIT-Verlag, pp. 239-260.
- 2005. *Der Traum vom guten Leben. Die eritreische warsay-Generation im Asmara der zweiten Nachkriegszeit*. Münster: LIT.

The mythical reflexivity of the Burji. Presentation of an ethnological-linguistic methodology for interpreting oral literature

Alexander Kellner¹

The Burji, an east-cushitic-speaking group living in Southwest Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, use their myths as a reflexive medium for thinking about problems and phenomena of today. In order to analyse the Burjis' 'mythical reflexivity', I developed an approach which combines hermeneutic and performative approaches with Bourdieu's theory of social practice and which is demonstrated here with the example of the myth of a clan founder in Burji.

Introductory Remarks

In this paper, I wish to present an interpretative approach for analysing oral literature the aim of which is to gain a deeper understanding of a given culture. I developed this approach – which is presented in full detail elsewhere – when I was dealing with the historical traditions and myths of the Burji which I had recorded in the original language.²

The original homeland of the Burji is the southern part of the Amarro mountains situated on the eastern side of the southern Ethiopian Rift Valley. Traditionally, the Burji are excellent agriculturalists, speaking an East Cushitic language. The number of people considering themselves as Burji is around 90,000. Before they were integrated into the Ethiopian Empire at the beginning of the 20th century, the Burji had a polycephalous social order. This is still true today where internal issues are concerned. Since the conquest of what we today call southern Ethiopia by Emperor Menilek II at the end of the 19th century, the majority of the Burji has left their homelands and built up communities in other parts of Ethiopia and in Kenya. The spatial dispersion of the Burji was accompanied by an internal social differentiation into groups with different linguistic and religious affiliations, economic situations and life-styles. Despite all these differences, the Burji nevertheless regard themselves as belonging together. Apart from the self-image of being master cultivators, the relation to their common traditional territory and the vernacular language, Burji regard their common treasure of myths and oral traditions, especially historical experiences, as an essential element of 'Burjiness'. In discussions about their identity these traditions serve as a significant discursive and reflexive medium.

The late Helmut Straube was the first to do systematic research on the Burji in 1955 and in 1973/4. Communication with the Burji has not been broken off since then. Since

¹ Universität München (University of Munich) Institut für Ethnologie und Afrikanistik Oettingenstr. 67, D-80538 München, Germany. E-mail: kellnera@web.de

² See Kellner, Alexander: *Mit den Mythen denken. Die Mythen der Burji als Ausdrucksform ihres Habitus* (with an English summary). Hamburg 2007.

the 1970s Hermann Amborn is doing research on the Burji-Konso cluster, and from 1998 until 2000 I carried out a 14-month fieldwork on the oral literature of the Burji.³

An important result of my work is that the myths of the Burji neither contain uncompromising or unchanging views about the world, nor set up orthodox rules which people must obey. On the contrary, they offer people thought patterns which inspire ideas on how to cope with problems and inconsistencies of human life. Oral traditions provide the Burji images and cognitive schemes out of which they develop discursive lines in order to evaluate their present situation and to anticipate future possibilities.

In order to analyse how the Burji reflect upon certain phenomena and problems with the help of their myths, I tried to combine hermeneutic and performative approaches with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice. In this paper I try to demonstrate my approach with the example of the myth of Yaayya, the (re-)founder of the clan of Baambala. This tradition is still deeply rooted in the minds of the Burji and can be seen as "key cultural text" (Silverstein & Urban 1996: 12) of the Burji because it occupies "a special position" within their culture and has become the "focus of multiple realizations."

Theory and methodology

Hermeneutics and performative approaches

During my fieldwork I recorded oral traditions from various genres in the original language which I transcribed and analysed linguistically. I put my focus on narratives which can be assigned to the genre "historical traditions" or "myths" and which the Burji would call *mammaahoo*. The contents of the narratives as well as the ethnographic information and linguistic modes of expressions contained therein were discussed with Burji from several villages.

As already mentioned, the interpretative analysis of the Burji texts was carried out with a threefold approach which combined hermeneutic and performative approaches with Bourdieu's theory of practice. Each of these approaches has its achievements but is insufficient if used as the sole basis.

By "hermeneutic approaches" I understand – with regard to interpretative analyses of oral literature – those kind of approaches which start from the assumption that taking the cultural context into consideration is indispensable for understanding the meaning(s) of a narrative (or any other piece of oral literature). In other words, the meanings of motives, linguistic expressions and cultural topics addressed in a narrative can only be grasped by the researcher when relationships between text elements and cultural, socio-political as well as historical contexts are established. On the other hand, culture-specific phenomena or the modes in which people reflect upon them become discernible and can be revealed through the contents of a tale, narrative, etc. (cf. Geider 1990: 16).

However, there are some problems with hermeneutics. Hermeneutics and its methodology were developed in western society, for interpreting first and foremost written testimonies. Therefore it is a questionable undertaking to apply hermeneutic

³ As far as the linguistic analysis of the Burji language is concerned, there are, apart from some short word lists, grammatical notes and specialised linguistic publications, two larger works, the etymological dictionary by Hans-Jürgen Sasse which appeared in 1982, and the grammatical sketch by Klaus Wedekind (1990). In Kellner (2007: part II) one finds some grammatical annotations and seven Burji narratives in the original language which are partly interlinearly translated. For the region which has come to be called South Ethiopia, interpretative analyses directly based on the original language are generally very rare. For Burji culture and history see Sasse & Straube 1977, Amborn 1994, 1995, Amborn and Kellner 1999 and Kellner 2007 with further references.

methods directly to oral traditions (or to culture in general, as it was suggested by Clifford Geertz⁴). Oral ‘texts’ are not invariable written documents detached from situational contexts. Hence it is problematic to consider the contents of oral traditions or the statements contained therein as timeless, trans-situational representations of culture-specific ‘facts.’ The decontextualization is driven further when, in a second step of hermeneutic analysis, these reified ‘facts’ are related to ethnographic information which is also decontextualised because it was collected in other contexts⁵. To conclude: in oral cultures, statements which speakers or the audience may consider as correct and true in a specific situation might be rejected by them in other situational contexts.⁶ In societies where writing as a medium is of minor importance, oral speech is always brought into line with the respective discursive situation and is not to be thought of as disseminating a timeless, leave alone universal truth. This does not mean at all that one has to turn one’s back on hermeneutic approaches. I applied them when the narrators themselves made connections to or hinted at culture-specific phenomena, or when Burji themselves with whom I discussed the recorded stories established a corresponding discursive context. The images, clichés and modes of speech used in a particular version of a story can only be understood when they are, as already said, linked to intersubjective, historically evolved horizons of meaning and practices from which they have emerged. Since images, motives and modes of expression, on the other hand, are not semantic units with invariable meanings but used by members of a specific culture as operators which can be handled and interpreted differently, the hermeneutic-interpretative analysis needs to return to the specific narrative performance or event.

Performative approaches which focus on the situational dynamics of oral performances gave me stimulus to regard the specific situation in which a narrative was recounted. Since the meaning of oral speech, other than that of a written text or testimony, is transmitted not only by lexemes but by prosodic features like intonation, speech speed, phonetic accentuations and non-verbal means like facial expressions or gestures too, Burji narrative performances were treated as individual speech events and transcribed according to the method of “speech-oriented transcription”, as developed by Thomas Geider (cf. 1988, 1990), which takes prosodic and non-verbal features into account. Second, the interaction between narrator and audience, the presence and expectations of the anthropologist, as well as the overall discursive framing were also considered when analysing the meaning of Burji narratives. The situational selection, arrangement, and stylistic variation of narrative elements are not just ornamental additions. The content and meaning of a narrative (or of any other piece of oral literature) cannot be separated from its formal features and situational embedding.

Pierre Bourdieu’s “Theory of Practice” was the third building block in my efforts to comprehend Burji narratives.⁷ To date, the potential of Bourdieu’s theory for analysing oral literature has been scarcely recognised. By employing Bourdieu’s concepts of “habitus” and “social field”, a perennial problem can be tackled which, in my view, has been not comprehensively and systematically solved: the micro-macro problem of how to relate the situated narrative events to larger social structures and other modes of

⁴ See, e. g., Geertz 1973.

⁵ For critics of Geertz’s hermeneutic approach see, e. g., Scholte 1986, Fuchs & Berg 1993, Hobart 2000, Hornbacher 2005: chap. I.1 and 2.

⁶ For the contextual nature of the concept of truth and lie among the Burji see Kellner 2006.

⁷ The number of Bourdieu’s publications is legion. One of his basic theoretical works is “The Logic of Practice” (1990).

practices. In addition, Bourdieu's theory provides a vocabulary to mediate the seeming contradictions between collectivity of oral traditions and their individual variations.

The potential of Bourdieu's theory of practice for analysing oral literature

Bourdieu's theory of practice is the attempt to overcome the antinomy between objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivist theories, like structuralism, hold that social relations and forces impose themselves upon agents, irrespective of their consciousness and will. Such approaches see human practice, says Bourdieu, as the automatic or unintended outcome of objective structures. Subjectivist theories, on the other hand, such as ethnomethodology, stress the 'constructivist' capabilities of individual agents. The failure of these theories is, however, according to Bourdieu, that they neglect the fact that orientations of action are not freely chosen but shaped by objective social structures. Bourdieu's theory of practice is the attempt to synthesize objectivism and subjectivism and to mediate between them. The key terms of his theory are: "habitus", "social field", and "capital".

Habitus designates the system of durable and transposable dispositions through which we perceive, judge and act in the world. The habitus does not determine our actions but rather disposes us to think, act and feel in certain ways or styles. These dispositions are acquired through lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings in social contexts, in distinct social spaces which Bourdieu calls "social fields." In western societies we find a multitude of such social spaces: arts, the economy, the law, politics, etc. Each of these social fields has a profile of its own and is endowed with a particular set of rules, principles and forms of authority which are incorporated by the participants. Social fields function as 'social arenas' where agents struggle over resources, referred to as capital, which are at stake in the field. For Bourdieu, a capital is any resource effective in a given social arena that enables one to appropriate the field-specific profits arising out of participation and contest in it. Capital comes in four principal species: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Since the habitus is acquired in social fields, i. e. in structured social contexts, it is a structured structure (*opus operatum*). But the habitus is at the same time the basis for reproducing (or modifying) these social contexts or fields, i. e. the habitus is a "structuring structure" (*modus operandi*) as well.

In my attempt to make Bourdieu's theory productive for the anthropological analysis of oral literature, I conceptualized oral traditions and their use as follows: oral traditions can be conceived as objectified expressions of the habitus, i. e. the habitus expresses itself in the oral traditions. Furthermore, habitus and oral traditions are dialectically related to each other: the habitus forces its way in the oral traditions which, on the other hand, contribute as structured objectifications of the habitus to its generation and strengthening. In other words, the habitus finds itself in the traditions and is spontaneously stimulated by them.

The next step is to clarify which fields of practice are of special relevance for the interpretative analysis of Burji narratives. These must be those fields in which oral traditions are deployed as one of the main sorts of capital. In this respect I defined a socio-political and a symbolical (sub-)field (which of course are analytical constructs).

There is no traditional Burji assembly in which speakers would not refer to historical narratives, myths, proverbs, parables or allegories. Those who show ambitions to take a position and play a role in the socio-political field are only persuasive when they have knowledge of Burji history and Burji customs and traditions. Not without reason Burji

say “*mammaahoo k’afey shiidi masheeninaa*” (“A speech which does not refer to orally transmitted traditions is barren”). An agent who could convert his cultural capital to social and symbolical capital is respectfully referred to as someone who “knows how to speak” and how to convince others (*afey beehaa lammi*).

The symbolical field is another field of practice where oral traditions as cultural capital are relevant. It is highly significant for Burji who seek their identity as Burji. For them, the socio-cultural elements which constitute ‘Burjiness’ manifest themselves nowadays increasingly through their conceptual and symbolical content. This explains why a Burji from Marsabit who, when trying to pick a mango fruit, almost fell down from the tree nevertheless stated: “You know the Burji are master agriculturalists, and this makes them distinct from other people.”⁸

In polycaphelous Burji society, the access to cultural capital is, in principle, not restricted. Anyone who has a keen interest in orally transmitted traditions can learn them (by participating in assemblies, personal inquiry, etc.). It must be added, however, that the wish to know and learn about oral traditions is stronger and fostered more when a person grows up or lives in a surrounding where this sort of capital is highly valued.

Example: The myth of Yaayya

In this section I wish to demonstrate my interpretative approach with the example of the Burjis’ myth of Yaayya.⁹ For the sake of brevity I cannot present my approach in full detail but only give highlights on it.

First, the content of the myth shall be briefly summarized. The myth tells us about the wondrous birth and deeds of Yaayya, the (re-)founder of the clan of Baambala. An unmarried girl tended cattle at a pond near Leemmoo, a village in the Ethiopian homelands of the Burji. After she had fallen asleep, a python wriggled out of the pond and spat onto her stomach. The girl became pregnant and gave birth to Yaayya. In most variants which I collected the Burji are afraid of the boy and his supernatural powers. Therefore, Yaayya has to leave Leemmoo and then starts roaming through Burjiland. During his migration he works miracles which are a blessing to the whole Burji community. The python stands here for the community of the ancestors.¹⁰ Yaayya not only (re-)founded his clan but also became the first *ganni* of the Baambala clan. Many Burji are captivated by the creational events which are reported in the Yaayya myth because they took place in their homeland and thus sanctify it.¹¹

The *ganni* are the most important dignitaries of the Burji and usually also clan leaders. They have special abilities which they inherit from their clan forebears. Their duty is to take care of the growth and thriving of all crops and domestic animals, and they are responsible for the prevention of all evil influences and for the well-being of

⁸ Personal communication Hermann Amborn.

⁹ For an in-depth interpretative analysis of the myth see Kellner 2007: chap. D II.

¹⁰ Pythons are thought to be messengers of the *ganni* and impersonate his close relationship with the ancestors. Among the Oromo and in the Burji-Konso group, the snake is regarded as an emblem and an embodiment of the primeval ancestors as well as of their fertility-giving powers (cf. Kellner 2007: 178 p. with further references). The story that a girl or woman became pregnant by a snake and that the child born became a clan founder is also found among the Konso (Jensen 1936: 386, Hallpike 1966, Watson 1998: Appendix, text 2) and the Boran (Haberland 1963: 157, Knutsson 1967: 144f., Hultin & Shongolo 2006).

¹¹ I speak of Yaayya as “(re-)founder” of the clan, because, on the one hand, he was begotten by a python and is thus a scion of the ancestral community; on the other hand, he has all the attributes and traits which are characteristic for primeval ancestors. Which quality of Yaayya is stressed depends on the narrative episode or the general context. Either Yaayya is portrayed as primeval ancestor or as chosen child of the ancestors.

the Burji people.¹² The clan of Baambala has four *ganni* who all trace their genealogy back to Yaayya. The highest-ranked among them protects the Burji from evil influences and external foes, is able to give fertility but also to withdraw it when people misbehave, and to ban as well as unleash lethal diseases. Together with the rainmaker, he is regarded as the most powerful *ganni*. (In the following, the term “Baambala *ganni*” refers to the highest-ranked one of the four Baambala *ganni*.)

In all variants which I collected the narrators occupy themselves more or less directly with the problem in which way the mythical events are of significance for the present and relevant for shaping and structuring the socio-political and symbolical field.

The variant which shall be discussed here was given by a Burji man who is in his seventies and whom I may call Karre.¹³ Karre is member of the Baambala clan and a close relative of the family of the Baambala *ganni*. The story he recounted is about a competition between young Yaayya and a powerful possession spirit. Karre told me this story two times, but in each of his performances he wanted to communicate another message. The first variant was recounted in a big round in Ralley-Biila, a village in Northern Burji. I had summoned up 20 old men to ask them questions about Burji history and culture. After I had asked the participants about the emergence of the *bokkola* and *garaa* disease, one man gave a short version of the Yaayya myth. (*Bokkola* and *garaa* are the names for beings or forces which bring feverish and lethal diseases; they can be banned as well as unleashed by the Baambala *ganni*.) The man said that Yaayya grew up for some time in the village of Leemmoo, but did not speak a single word. Then, one day, Yaayya called out the words “*bokkola* haa, *garaa* haa!” (“*bokkola* hey! *garaa* hey!”) by which he unleashed these deadly diseases. This induced Karre to give a long version of the Yaayya myth. It contained the following episode:

One day, the boy climbed a hill in Leemmoo. A possession spirit which claimed the hill challenged Yaayya to a trial of strength. A solid rock was to be broken to pieces. The spirit let off a storm, but the rock remained as it was. Then Yaayya called out “*bokkola* haa, *garaa* haa!” – and the rock broke into pieces. At the same time, he brought with these words the *bokkola* and *garaa* disease into existence. The spirit said, “Okay, you are the stronger of us two. The earth shall be yours, the skies will be mine” – and, by saying this, vanished up into the skies.

About six weeks later I met with Karre again in order to interview him about certain cultural topics. One of my assistants, who interpreted for me and whom I may call Baate, was also present. Baate is a man in his 40s and works as evangelist for the Kale Hiwot Church. He is a friend of Karre and also member of the Baambala clan.

I asked Karre to recount the episode about Yaayya’s competition with the possession spirit once again, which he did. By only slightly varying the episode he turned it in a new direction. Whereas in his first variant he put the story into the discursive context of the *bokkola* and *garaa* disease, he now used it as a reflexive medium to think about the relationship between the *ganni* of the Baambala clan and the possession spirits. This shows clearly the mutual relationship between form, content and situation of telling.

The possession spirits are called *waac’i* by the Burji. The *waac’i* cult came to Burji at the end of the 19th century via adjacent Amarro and is to be seen as offspring of the

¹² There are parallels to priestly institutions of many other Oromo groups, especially however to the remaining groups of the Burji-Konso cluster (Konso: Hallpike, 1972: 180-186; Dullay and D’iraša: see Amborn 1983 passim with further references).

¹³ For an in-depth analysis of this variant see Kellner 2007: chap. D II 3 (for the text in the original language see *ibid.*: 405 pp.).

North-Ethiopian *zar* cult.¹⁴ The cult is rejected by devout Christians and Muslims, who refer to these beings as “satan”, but it is nevertheless still practiced in Burji society. *Waac’i* mediums and *ganni* represent two antagonistic elements in traditional Burji religion. Whereas the *ganni* inherit their powers from the ancestors, the authority of the mediums is based on a personal vocation; the *ganni* undertake rituals for the public good, but the mediums are concerned with the private individual and his trouble caused by spiritual beings or forces; the *ganni* are the most important link to the ancestors and guarantee the social order, whereas the mediums are possessed by spirits which smugly and arbitrarily violate or disregard it.

Contrary to his first variant, Karre now lets Yaayya call out, “*aabbattanoo akkattanoo (buura maaldacoo)*” (“Upon the *buura* and *maaldacoo* of my fathers and grandfathers!”).¹⁵ Whereas in the previous variant Yaayya kindled and banned by his first words the *bokkola* and *gaaraa* disease, he addresses them now to the ancestors.

The *waac’i*’s flight into the skies shows parallels to the old myths about the dissociation of Sky God and the Earth which were widespread in the region that has come to be called South Ethiopia.¹⁶ Karre uses this idea as a structuring structure which leads him to certain insights. In the indigenous religions in the South, God is associated with the sky and thought of as ‘*deus otiosus*’ who has withdrawn from the world. Similar to God, the *waac’i* would not directly exert an influence on the destinies of the humans if people would leave these spirits in their celestial exile to which they were sent by Yaayya;¹⁷ instead, they continue to contact them through mediums. The spheres of the *waac’i* and the *ganni* are strictly separated; the cleavage between them is as wide as between the skies and the earth.¹⁸

At the end of his story, Karre explicates the message he wants to put forward by giving an example: in case of that someone has damaged or stolen someone’s property, the wrongdoer or his family can ask the Baambala *ganni* for mediation. The Baambala *ganni*, then, does not appear in person at the reconciliation meeting but sends one of his messengers, giving him his *lissoo*, which is an insignia of a *ganni*.¹⁹ This custom is now (re-)interpreted by Karre in the light of the story: the wrongdoer or his family may be ‘impurified’ by a *waac’i*; therefore the *ganni* sends one of his messengers in order to avoid these beings.

Karre addresses his story to the evangelical Protestants among the Burji and all those who question the institution of the Baambala *ganni* whom some of them purport to be in

¹⁴ Much has been written on possession cults in Ethiopia (cf. Haberland 1960; Lewis 1983; Palmisano 2000 & 2003; Kellner 2007: 223-239 with further references).

¹⁵ The *buura* necklace and *maaldacoo* ring are insignia of a *ganni* (cf. Amborn & Kellner 1999: s.v.).

¹⁶ “... Heaven did not stand alone but was regarded as working in co-operation with Earth in the work of Creation. Heaven, the male principle, was thought of as begetting, Earth, the female principle, as conceiving and giving birth” (Haberland 1963: 778). For this dualistic idea in the region which today is Southern Ethiopia cf. Jensen 1936: 499 p., Nr. 10 (Darassa); Haberland 1963: 563 pp. (Oromo); Hallpike 1972: 223 p., 286 (Konso); Amborn et al. 1980: 45 (Dullay).

¹⁷ Of course, Karre does not place God and *waac’i* on the same level. As already said, he uses the idea of the dissociation of Sky God and Earth as a cognitive scheme.

¹⁸ *Waac’i* is also one of the names for God, which is still used in ceremonial contexts. The word derives from the East-Cushitic root *waak’* - which means ‘sky god’. There are good reasons for the assumption that in the South (and in Burji too) elements of the indigenous idea of a dualistic (Sky) God have survived in the possession cults (cf. Kellner 2007: 223-29 with further references).

¹⁹ “A *lissóo* is a strong leather stick made from hippo hide, which is set completely with brass rings. On one side of the stick, which is approximately 50 cm in length, there is a loop through which a brass ring is drawn. [...] At peace meetings with the Guji ‘parlementaires’ wore a *lissóo* as a sign of their peaceful purposes.” It serves as a sign of dignity for various dignitaries (Amborn & Kellner 1999: s.v.).

league with ‘satanic’ powers. His point is that it was Yaayya who put the ‘satanic’ possession spirits in their place. By taking the particular conditions of the performative event into account (presence of an evangelical Burji Protestant) and by developing the story against this performative background, Karre opened up a new horizon from where he could reflect upon the relationship between the *ganni* of the Baambala clan and the possession spirits.

Following Bourdieu (1990: 57), the ability of getting inspirations from a myth or historical tradition presupposes a habitus that so perfectly possesses the mode of mythical speaking that the habitus is possessed by it, so much so that the habitus “asserts its freedom” from it “by realizing the rarest of the possibilities” that this mode of speaking necessarily implies. Habitual dispositions and the developing story stimulate each other, cognitive schemes or models are simultaneously applied to and obtained out of a story, and the narrator “finds in his discourse the triggers for his discourse, which goes along like a train laying its own rails” (Bourdieu 1990: 57).

References

- Amborn, Hermann. 1994. ‘Rethinking One’s Own Culture (Emic and Etic Considerations).’ In: H. G. Marcus (ed), *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies*, vol. 2, Lawrenceville, pp. 773-90.
- ‘Von der Stadt zur sakralen Landschaft. Bóohee Burji. Eine städtische Siedlung in Südäthiopien. Von Helmut Straube, bearbeitet von Hermann Amborn.’ *Tribus* 44, pp. 65-99.
- Amborn, Hermann & Alexander Kellner. 1999. ‘Burji Vocabulary of Cultural Items. An Insight into Burji Culture. Based on the Field Notes of Helmut Straube.’ *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 58, pp. 5-67.
- Amborn Hermann, Gunther Minker & Hans-Jürgen Sasse. 1990. *Das Dullay. Materialien zu einer ostkuschitischen Sprachgruppe*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (Originally published in French 1980 by Les Éditions de Minuit as *Le sens pratique*).
- Fuchs, Martin & Eberhard Berg. 1993. ‘Phänomenologie der Differenz. Reflexionsstufen ethnographischer Repräsentation.’ In: Eberhard Berg & Martin Fuchs (eds), *Kultur, soziale Praxis, Text*, Frankfurt a. Main: Suhrkamp, pp. 11-108.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures. Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books
- Geider, Thomas. 1988. ‘Orale Transkription: Überlegungen und Vorschläge zu einer sprecherorientierten Vertextung mündlicher Erzählungen (Pokomo-Märchen).’ *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 13, pp. 57-94.
- 1990. *Die Figur des Oger in der traditionellen Literatur und Lebenswelt der Pokomo in Ost-Kenya*. Köln: Rüdiger Köppe.
- Haberland, Eike. 1960. ‘Besessenheitskulte in Süd-Äthiopien.’ *Paideuma* 7, pp. 142-50.
- 1963. *Galla Süd-Äthiopiens. Ergebnisse der Frobenius-Expeditionen 1950-52 und 1954-56*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.
- Hallpike, Christopher R. 1966. ‘Some Stories from Konso.’ *Ethiopia Observer* 10/3.
- 1972. *The Konso of Ethiopia. A study of the values of a Cushitic People*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Hobart, Marc. 2000. *After culture. Anthropology as radical metaphysical critique.* Yogyakarta: Duta Wacana University Press.
- Hornbacher, Annette. 2005. *Zuschreibung und Befremden. Postmoderne Repräsentationskrise und verkörpertes Wissen im balinesischen Tanz.* München: Reimer.
- Hultin, Jan & Abdullahi A. Shongolo. 2006. 'Heavenly descent and Endogamy: On the person of Qaallu and Qaallitti amongst the Boran.' In: Siegbert Uhlig (ed), *Proceedings of the 15th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 111-18.
- Jensen, Adolf E. 1936. *Im Lande des Gada. Wanderungen zwischen Volkstrümmern Südabessiniens.* Unter Mitarbeit von H. Wohlenberg und A. Bayerle. Stuttgart: Strecker & Schröder.
- Kellner, Alexander. 2001. '“The Lazy Baboon”. A linguistic analysis and anthropological interpretation of a Burji tale.' *Afrikanistische Arbeitspapiere* 65, pp. 41-69.
- . 2006. 'Kontextualität und Sensibilität. Wahrheit und Lüge bei den Burji in Südwestäthiopien.' In: Annette Hornbacher (ed), *Ethik, Ethos, Ethnos. Aspekte und Probleme interkultureller Ethik*, Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 275-312.
- . 2007. *Mit den Mythen denken. Die Mythen der Burji als Ausdrucksform ihres Habitus.* Hamburg: LIT Verlag.
- Knutsson, Karl E. 1967. *Authority and Change: A Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia.* Gotebörg: Ethnografiska Museet.
- Lewis, Herbert S. 1983. 'Spirit Possession in Ethiopia: An Essay in Interpretation.' In: Stanislav Segert & Ardrás J. E. Bodrogligeti (eds), *Ethiopian Studies. Dedicated to Wolf Leslau*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, pp. 466-80.
- Palmisano, Antonio Luigi. 2000. 'On the theory of trance: the zar cult in Ethiopia.' *kea* 13, pp. 119-36.
- . 2003. *Trance and Translation in the “zar” Cult of Ethiopia.* In: Tullio Maranhão & Bernhard Streck (eds), *Translation and Ethnography. The Anthropological Challenge of Intercultural Understanding.* Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, pp. 135-51.
- Sasse, Hans-Jürgen. 1982. *An Etymological Dictionary of Burji.* Hamburg: Helmut Buske.
- Sasse, Hans-Jürgen & Helmut Straube. 1977. 'Kultur und Sprache der Burji in Süd-Äthiopien. Ein Abriß.' In: Wilhelm J. G. Möhlig, Franz Rottland & Bernd Heine (eds), *Zur Sprachgeschichte und Ethnohistorie in Afrika*, Berlin: Reimer, pp. 239-66.
- Scholte, Bob. 1986. 'The Charmed Circle of Geertz's Hermeneutics.' *Critique of Anthropology* 7(1), pp. 5-15.
- Silverstein, Michael & Greg Urban. 1996. *Natural Histories of Discourse.* Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Watson, Elizabeth E. 1998. *Ground Truths: Land and Power in Konso, Ethiopia.* Unpublished D Ph. Dissertation. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.
- Wedekind, Klaus. 1990. *Generating Narratives. Interrelations of Knowledge, Text Variants, and Cushitic Focus Strategies.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Destitution and Life Quality: Objective, subjective and dynamic measures and interpretation based on household cases from Dinki, Amhara Region

Alula Pankhurst¹

The destitute are not conceived of as categorically different either terminologically or in attributes; they were neither ostracised nor hopeless. Decline in life standards related to ageing, disability, loss of kin support, and shocks. Life satisfaction often declined and the young were more optimistic. Contentment dynamics fluctuated more than life standards and related to social factors, notably marriage and divorce.

Introduction

The destitute are not conceived of as categorically different either terminologically or in attributes; they were neither ostracised nor hopeless. Decline in life standards related to ageing, disability, loss of kin support, and shocks. Life satisfaction often declined and the young were more optimistic. Contentment dynamics fluctuated more than life standards and related to social factors, notably marriage and divorce.

Qualitatively rich studies of poverty and destitution in Ethiopia are rare (Aspen 2003, Yared 2002, 2003). Quantitative studies focus on objective data from macro or panel surveys (Dercon and Krishnan 1996, Tassew and Daniel 2002, Dercon 2004). There are few attempts to combine quantitative and qualitative data (Bevan and Bereket 1996, Sharp *et al.* 2003), or to compare objective measures with subjective self evaluations (Dercon and Hoddinott 2005). This paper² seeks to contribute by considering cultural constructions of destitution, and relating objective measures of land, livestock and other assets, to subjective self perceptions of comparative poverty, changing living standards and contentment dynamics among very poor household heads in the village of Dinki in Ankobär *wäräda*, Northeastern Šäwa, Amhara Region, one of four rural sites studied by the Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project (WeD).³

The first part considers views of both wealthier and very poor households about destitution, and discusses the terms used and the ways in which the destitute are characterised by others and by themselves. The second part considers the dynamics that

¹ Visiting Research Fellow, Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project, University of Bath; email: alulapankhurst@ethionet.et; www.wed-ethiopia.org.

² I wish to thank the following persons: Philippa Bevan who worked closely with me on the design and analysis, Damtew Yirgu and Tsega Melese who carried out the research and discussed their findings, John Hoddinott who identified households moving into poverty together with Stefan Dercon who improved the measurement of consumption patterns, Marleen Dekker who produced and shared the Resources and Needs Survey Asset Index, Yisak Tafere and Feleke Tadele for helping manage the research and Tom Lavers who helped in analyzing the data. Responsibility for the views expressed remain mine. I am grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council and the University of Bath Wellbeing in Developing Countries project under whose auspices the research was carried out.

³ The WeD project based at the University of Bath has been carried out in Bangladesh, Thailand Peru and Ethiopia from 2003 to 2007. In Ethiopia four rural and two urban sites were studied, the rural sites being ones that have been surveyed by the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey (ERHS).

lead to deteriorations in objective conditions and subjective perceptions among the very poor between 1994 and 2004 based on descriptions of cases selected from the Ethiopian Rural Household Survey (ERHS) for 1994 and 2004 and the WeD 2004 Resources and Needs Survey (RANS) interviewed in mid 2005, using a module that included open-ended questions and graphs. Ten cases are presented including: 1) where objective and subjective wealth status had declined between 1994 and 2004, 2) cases of very poor in 1994 to find out what happened to them, and 3) cases of very poor in terms of land, livestock and assets in 2004 including those who viewed their subjective status as having changed and those who did not. The final part suggests empirical and methodological conclusions.

Cultural constructions and social realities of destitution⁴

Terms used to refer to the destitute

Five terms were used to refer to destitute persons. Three of these use adjectives qualifying the basis term for poor (*däha*). One of these expressions *bäṭam däha* or 'very poor' simply emphasizes extreme poverty. The second *yämäčärräša däha* or 'the last of the poor', i.e. the poorest of the poor, is relational in distinguishing the poorest from the poor. The third qualifying adjective *miskin* deriving from the Arabic *miskīn* (Cowan 1976: 909), has a connotation of misery and wretchedness (Leslau 1976:24, Kane 1990:219) with the implication that others should feel sorry for them. The remaining two terms emphasise material indigence: *yaṭṭa*, literally 'lacking', refers to not having possessions and *mənəm yälelläw*, 'one who has nothing' also highlights penury. None of the terms suggest that the destitute are conceived of as a category apart or that they are socially ostracised; the Amharic usage of the term *miskin* does not seem to have the Arabic connotation of submissiveness and servility but rather of deserving pity and hence assistance.

In discussing the situation in Wällo the *Destitution in Ethiopia's Northeastern Highlands* study (Sharp et al. 2003:11-2) found five terms that qualify the term *däha*, including two of those mentioned above: *yämäčärräša däha*, and *mənəm yälelläw*. The authors include other terms such as *čəggərtäñña*, 'those with problems', *šom adari* 'those who spend the night fasting', i.e. go to bed hungry, and *wəha anfare* 'those who cook water'. The authors suggested that three elements: inability to meet basic needs, lack of assets and dependence on others recur frequently, that some terms imply being on the last or the bottom level of society and others suggest reaching the end of one's resources and habitual hunger. They also conclude that the destitute were seen as extremely poor rather than categorically different, and as being on the bottom of a sliding scale of poverty into which anyone may fall at some time⁵.

⁴ This section is based on the Elites and Destitutions module carried out in October 2004 in the six WeD sites. Male and female researchers first talked to knowledgeable informants with whom they had developed trust about who the destitute are, how they can be distinguished, whether the condition can be changed and inherited, what their survival strategies are, their relations with others and involvement in institutions. The two researchers each then held discussions with three to five persons who were identified as destitute. This summary is based on discussions in Dinki with four knowledgeable non-destitute informants, three female and one male, and seven 'destitutes', three male and four females.

⁵ This may be behind the way in which beggars are sometimes referred to as *yäne biṭe* literally 'someone like me' (Kane 1990:945).

Characterisations of the destitute by others

Both male and female respondents described the destitute firstly in terms of what they lacked, notably having no livestock ('not even a hen'), no land or very little, sometimes referred to as *yädäkuman märet*, literally 'land of the tired' i.e. weak or feeble (Kane 1990:1816), no money, and insufficient food, lacking *yäälät qurs*, literally 'daily breakfast', or basic food so that they faced uncertainty of daily subsistence and often went hungry, had less meals, or sometimes made do with *qolo* 'roasted cereals'. They were said all to have a house but which was small, shabby, or in poor condition. They were also said to lack even basic assets.

The poor were distinguished from the destitute as they had at least some assets, land, and animals and were assured of daily food. One woman, Geṭe, suggested that the poor produce the food they eat from their own land whereas the destitute do not.

In addition to material lackings respondents mentioned poor health, long term illness, and old age as common attributes of the destitute. These were also noted by Sharp *et al.* (2003). In relational terms the destitute were characterised as 'lacking helpers', often being single or living with just a spouse, although Geṭe, mentioned that they could also 'live with [too] many children'. They also could not afford to join *əddər* 'funeral associations' though local traditions of charity provide them with burial services. Regarding how they became destitute, one of the men, Ahmäd, suggested that it could be through ill health or laziness but that it could also happen despite hard work and efforts.

In terms of what they did to survive the destitute were said often to be *muyatännä* 'daily labourers' working for the wealthy rather than on their own account; they also sold firewood to earn money, the men were involved in weaving and women in spinning. During times of severe drought farmers who are not destitute and do not engage in weaving at other times may turn to weaving as a survival strategy as happened in 1984-5. The destitute rely heavily on others. Ahmäd suggested that they borrow grain, money and other necessities from neighbours and relatives. Geṭe mentioned that they had to pay high interest on borrowed money, and relied on help from relatives or the wealthy. Mulatwa emphasised that they could work for the wealthy only if they were healthy. Ayäläč stressed that since they had little land they could not work and produce efficiently and could not have a good quality of life. However, they were not perceived as socially set apart or marginalised.

In terms of their attitudes to life they were said to experience hopelessness and not believe that they could escape poverty. Asked whether destitution was inherited, Ahmäd suggested that this was not always the case as a labourer's children may manage to improve their lives, and some people were able to escape poverty through remittances sent by children working abroad. Likewise, Geṭe suggested that they could improve their conditions but only if they were not very sick or too old. However, Ayäläč said that destitution was often inherited.

Self-characterisations of the destitute

Among the three men and four women who were approached as being among the destitute all recognised that they were among the poorest and some even described themselves as 'the poorest', and believed they were known as such. 'Every body knows I am the poorest' as Sitti put it. All three men and one of the women were elderly, in their sixties in the case of the men and the woman in her seventies. One man and one woman were living entirely on their own, two men were living only with their wife, one woman

was living with her husband only, another only with her children and the third with her father, brother and small child.

All of the destitute had a house, though these were small. Most did not have much land beyond the house plot. Mahmud had a little plot of land that a relative gave him and Abba Muga lived with a wife he married recently living on her land. Mulunäš worked on her father's land and lived with him. None of the destitute had livestock, 'not even a hen' as several of them put it.

All the destitute said they faced food shortages and several mentioned health problems. Zahara mentioned sometimes not having food all day, Faṭuma said she usually ate twice a day. Mulunäš said she did not eat everyday and sometimes had to survive on some roasted grain.⁶ Faṭuma mentioned that she lacked money to go to the health centre when feeling ill, and worried who would take care of her when she became very sick. Mulunäš pointed out that her clothes were very old.

In terms of the survival strategies weaving, daily labour and firewood collection and sale were important. Abbabu depended on weaving as his health is not good enough for agricultural work and Abba Muga also weaved. Mahmud worked as a daily labourer, exchanged his labour to get oxen service and also collected and sold firewood. Abbabu was exempted from community work due to illness. Among the women Zahara only worked in the house and relied on her husband who worked for others. She did domestic work, fetching water, and sometimes went to market. Faṭuma used to spin cotton to earn money but is now too old and her eyesight is not good enough. Mulunäš worked on her father land.

The destitute men had all been relatively well off previously and all three have suffered from ill health. Abbabu's mother was a landlord with a lot of land. After the revolution most of the land was taken but he was left with a small amount. However, even that was taken since he and his mother were too ill to cultivate it and pay the tax. Mahmud was involved in trade, living in Mätahara, but when he fell ill came to live in Dinki where a relative gave him a plot and has since been living there in poverty. Abba Muga had land during the Därg and a good family life. Things went wrong for him when his best friend ran off with his wife taking much of his property too. He has been very unhappy and said he still feels the pain of humiliation, although he has remarried recently.

The destitute did not express a sense of being deliberately excluded, ostracised and isolated. They are too poor to join *əddər*, but said they would receive burial services. The two Christian women belonged to a Maryam *māhabār*, and the two Muslim women drank coffee on the first of the month with neighbours. They borrowed tools and food from neighbours, socialised with them and some obtained support when needed from relatives. Sitti said: 'Everybody feels sorry for me and supports me'. Faṭuma mentioned neighbours giving her cereals in the harvest season. Mahmud borrowed grain from friends and lenders, entering agreements to repay in kind after the harvest, but double the amount borrowed.

Regarding their aspirations, among the women Zahara said she hoped to get land and enough food to survive. Mulunäš aspired to get her own land to improve her life. Sitti said she prayed to Allah to give her a better life, and give her family good health. Likewise, Faṭuma prayed for daily food and health to work hard. Among the men Abbabu said he had no aspirations to change his life, and expressed a sense of

⁶ Reducing meals amounts and frequency is common in times of food shortage (Pankhurst and Bevan 2004).

hopelessness. Mahmud aspired to gain more land through *māgazo* share-cropping arrangements, if Allah keeps him in good health, and Abba Muga said he prayed to Allah to help him get money hoping his life might change.

Poverty dynamics: objective and subjective data and interpretation⁷

The following section considers objective data on material poverty in terms of land, livestock and assets in relation to subjective assessments by informants of their relative ranking within the community, their relative status compared with five years earlier and one year earlier and with their father at the same age, and in relation to their subjective views of their standard of living expressed in their Standard of Living Graph (SLG)⁸ and their life satisfaction as recorded in their Global Happiness Score (GHS)⁹ and their Contentment Graph (CG).¹⁰ The ten cases considered include 1) two who status declined between 1994 and 2004, 2) two of the poorest in 1994, 3) two who were poor in 2004 but considered that their status had changed significantly since the past five years, 4) two who were poor in 2004 but considered that their status had not changed, 5) one who was poor in 2004 in terms of assets, 6) one that was rich in 2004 in assets but poor in land and livestock, and 7) one that was poor in 2004 yet happy.

Households that moved into poverty between 1994-2004

Two households among six identified as having moved down significantly¹¹ between the 1994 and 2004 ERHS in terms of three measures: consumption,¹² livestock¹³ and self-perception were interviewed.¹⁴ One of these can be considered in terms of objective

⁷ This section is based on two poverty dynamics modules carried out in June and July 2005. The first involved 20 households selected from five types of households: 1) whose objective and subjective wealth status changed between 1994 and 2004, 2) who were at the wealth extremes in 1994, 3) whose perceived RANS wealth category in 2004 differs markedly from their current perception of their status five years earlier, 4) whose perceived wealth category in the RANS is the same as their perceived status five years earlier, and 5) whose perceived RANS wealth category is at odds with their perceived happiness. The second module considered six households three from the wealthiest and three from the poorest in terms of assets. This discussion considers only ten cases among the poorer households in Dinki.

⁸ The SLG was used to place the household on a scale of 7 categories from the richest to the poorest and records the household status in the imperial, Därg and EPRDF periods with a focus on the last ten years.

⁹ The GHS was a measure used in the RANS to record the household's head's perception of the household's happiness with three scores: 1 = very happy; 2 = fairly happy, and 3 = not too happy.

¹⁰ The CG was used to plot changes in the household's contentment over the past ten years on a scale of 1 to 10.

¹¹ For consumption and livestock a decrease of 15 percent or more was considered; for self-perception a household was described as moving into poverty if it reported being better off 10 years ago, but now report being poor. i.e., you perceived yourself to be, ten years ago, very rich, rich, comfortable and now you see yourself as never quite having enough, being poor or destitute.

¹² The definition of Dercon and Hoddinott is as follows: 'Consumption is defined as the sum of values of all food items, including purchased meals and non-investment non-food items. The latter are interpreted in a limited way, so that contributions for durables and non-durables, as well as health and education expenditures are excluded. Although there are good conceptual reasons for including use values for durables or housing, we do not do so here; the heterogeneity in terms of age and quality of durables owned by our respondents, together with the near complete absence of a rental market for housing would make the calculation of use values highly arbitrary. Because comparisons of productive and consumer durable holdings between 1994 and 2004 show rising holdings of these durables and comparisons of school enrollment data show significant increases in enrollment, *ceteris paribus*, our consumption estimates may understate the actual increases in household welfare.'

¹³ Livestock were measure in terms of household self reports of the value of all animals owned by the household.

¹⁴ John Hoddinott worked out lists of households that have moved into and out of poverty between the two ERHS surveys, and used the improved comparison of consumption data by Stefan Dercon in the

indicators of land and livestock as being among 'the very poor' (071) and the other (025) among 'the poor'. In terms of self-evaluation on a seven category scale from the richest to the poorest, the former identified herself as 'the poorest' and the latter as 'a little poorer than most'.

Case 1: Elderly widow: Household 071 was composed of a single elderly widow aged 72. She married her first husband 50 years ago and had one son but divorced after three years. She lived with her second husband for more than 30 years and they were happy despite not having children. Her household was among the richest in the imperial period and rich during the Därg, but has declined since the death of her second husband, when their land was taken. Her house burnt down in the late Därg period, and she lost all her assets. She married a third husband who died after eight years. Her only son died two years ago and his children did not help her. She had no land or livestock. She claimed to be 'much worse' than five years ago and one year ago. The SLG shows a decline over the three regimes, dropping to the poorest during the EPRDF period and declining further within that category over the past ten years. Her CG also declined drastically from 6 to 1 out of 10, though her GHS was average at 2 or 'fairly happy'.

The household was clearly among the poorest without land and livestock and low on the Asset Index. All the measures are consistent in expressing a decline in standard of living. The woman suggested that the decline was due to the death of her husband, loss of assets and ageing. The SLG does not suggest a drastic drop in living standards in the past ten years, but the CG shows declining contentment from just under average to just above rock bottom which is consistent with the description, and is in line with the objective indicators. The GHS of 2 or 'fairly happy' is surprising and out of tune with the subjective indicators of decline in the RANS, and the clear sense of declining satisfaction expressed in the CG.

Case 2: Elderly male headed household: Household 025 comprised three members whose male head was 80, his wife aged 50 and a grandson aged 6. The household was formed 30 years ago and they only had one daughter. The household had 1.5 hectare of land, none irrigated, and they had only a cow and calf. The head saw his household as 'a little worse' than five years ago, and 'the same' as one year ago, but 'poorer' than his father. The SLG suggested that the household was poorer than most during the Därg, with a slight decrease in the EPRDF period, until the last three years when there was a further decline to 'a little poorer than most' ending at the top of the 'among the poorest' category in 2005. The CG remained constantly well above average till 2001, and declined sharply to well below average reaching 3 out of 10 in the past two years. The GHS score was 1 or 'very happy'. The elderly household head had not been healthy, and was a religious teacher giving out his land to sharecroppers. He lost his hearing 15 years earlier and his sight five years ago.

The household was in the poorer category, notably in terms of livestock and assets. The head's view of the household as 'a little poorer than most' seemed accurate. In terms of change, the ERHS data showed a decline on all three counts, and the RANS self assessment likewise stated some decrease, and the SLG also suggested a gradual decline particularly in the past three years. The contrast between the SLG which shows only a minor drop and the CG which shows a dramatic drop illustrates the depressing effect of ageing with consequent disability. The GHS top score is out of tune with this picture, and

selection.

suggests that the measure did not pick up the clear depression of the head with loss of his hearing and sight.

Interpretation

Considering the above two cases what accounts for the decline noted in the objective and most of the subjective data? Both cases suggest that ageing of the household head with consequent inability to work and compounding disabilities of loss of eyesight and hearing in the case of the man were major factors in their decline. In the case of the woman the death of her husband led to land confiscation, and her house burning to loss of assets, suggesting that she suffered from a series of compounding misfortunes. The lack of children to support them, with the male head's only daughter leaving, and the female head's only son dying are also important factors. The GHS provides limited information and may be misleading as the woman had the middle score of 'fairly happy' and the man the top score of 'very happy'. The graphs of living standard and contentment present a more accurate picture and suggest one should be wary of such a general global score which may be misleading and does not capture poverty dynamics. The contrast between the SLG which shows a gradual drop and the CG which shows a dramatic drop illustrates the depressing effect of ageing with consequent disability, even if the living standard may not have declined dramatically.

Poorest households in 1994: what happened to them?

The two households interviewed were selected for being among the poorest in 1994 ERHS in order to consider what had happened to them by 2004. Both may be considered to be in the 'very poor' category in objective material terms, and both are female headed. In terms of self perceptions 084 saw herself as 'a little poorer than most' in 2004, and 069 placed herself 'among the poorest' in 2004, and also saw herself as 'poorer than her father'.

Case 3: Divorced woman: Household 084 comprised 3 members; the head was a woman aged 50, living with her niece and granddaughter. She came to Dinki with poor parents when she was three, was married at 15 and got divorced after six years having had a son. She lived alone for two years then married her second husband who was a soldier who went away. She waited for him for five years, heard he had died, but found out he had remarried elsewhere. She lived with her third husband for four years before divorcing him and has lived on her own for the past eight years. She had been engaged in daily labour and as a forest guard. Her niece came to live with her to work as a labourer but then married away, and her granddaughter came to live with her from 2001. She had 0.63 hectare of land which she had to give to sharecroppers and a shared cow and goat and had slightly improved her life from planting onions. Her son was not supportive but she had good relations with a neighbour who became her son's godfather.

The household was clearly poor in terms of land, livestock and assets. The self perception in the RANS did not place the household right at the bottom but as 'a little poorer than most'. The ERHS data showed an improvement in terms of consumption and perception but not livestock. The household owned part of a cow and goat which might explain the livestock increase. The SLG suggested a slight improvement during the Därg, remaining at the same level during the past ten years. The RANS subjective response also suggested no change in the past five and one years. This is at odds with the ERHS objective evidence of improvement. The CG was very high and constant, thought the GHS was average at 'fairly happy'. The sense one gets is of a woman who

despite being very poor feels she has managed to improve her life a little and is fairly content. The ERHS and the SLG seem to concur on improvement, though the latter suggests an improvement earlier, whereas the RANS subjective score suggests no change.

Case 4: Elderly woman: Household 069 comprised 3 members headed by a woman aged 80, living with two grandsons. She came from a middle wealthy household; her father was a religious leader who married her off to one of his disciples. When her husband died she did not remarry. She relied on a son who has his own household. She had only 0.5 hectare of land, given out to sharecroppers and only six chickens. She saw herself as 'among the poorest', and 'the same as last year' but 'much worse' than five years ago and 'poorer than her father'. The GHS score was 3 or 'not too happy'.

The household is clearly poor, with little land, only chickens, and a low asset rank. The head also categorized the household as 'among the poorest' which seems a fair portrayal. In terms of change, the ERHS comparison found a marked decline in terms of consumption and perception, but not livestock. This might be because the household did not have much livestock in any case. The RANS comparison with five years ago was 'much worse', though it was 'the same' as a year ago. The SLG decline from 'about average' in imperial and Därg times to 'among the poorest' in the EPRDF period fits with the objective data. The contentment decline from average to very low (5 to 1) and then remaining constant suggests that the ageing process has affected the household recently. The GHS of 3 or 'unhappy' may also relate to suffering from ageing, loss of hearing and sight. The objective and subjective data concur and the standard of living and contentment show similar trends.

Interpretation

The two households discussed above are both headed by women and both very poor. However, whereas one *improved* in the EHRS comparison in terms of consumption and perception but not livestock, the other *declined* in terms of consumption and perception but not livestock. The woman whose household seems to have improved did obtain good income from onions on sharecropped land but she did not suggest an improvement in the RANS. The woman whose household declined was extremely old and had lost her sight and hearing; she also had given out her little land to sharecroppers. She saw herself as much worse off than five years ago and the same as one year ago. A major difference between the two therefore seems to be ageing and disability. The younger woman was able to work for wage labour and had good relations with her neighbours. Although she did not acknowledge improvement in her self assessment she placed herself as 'a little poorer than most' rather than 'among the poorest'. In contrast the older woman saw herself as 'among the poorest' and 'much worse off' than five years ago, with a sharp decline in contentment.

Poor households in 2004 whose status changed significantly

The two households interviewed were very poor households that recorded in the 2004 RANS that their status had changed significantly, in one case improving and in the other decreasing since five years ago. In the RANS both ranked themselves as 'the poorest'. Household 042 claimed to be 'much better' than five years ago and 'the same' as one year ago. Household 074 claimed to be 'much worse' than five years ago and than one year ago. However, 042 was found to have moved *into* poverty in the ERHS comparison

whereas 074 was not in the ERHS sample. Both consider themselves to be 'poorer than their father'.

Case 5: Poor young man: Household 042 consisted of a single young man aged 21 whose father died eight years ago and whose mother left with his siblings to live with her brother. One sister who married away came back to live with him. He had 0.75 hectare of land, some irrigated. He had only three goats and a chicken. The household was found to be 'much better' than five years ago, and 'the same' as a year ago. Despite a subjective improvement in the RANS, in the ERHS comparison it was found to have moved *into* poverty in terms of perception and consumption but not livestock. The head worked for wage labour and to get oxen.

This household was formed after the death of the head and disintegration of the parental household. The household is very poor in terms of livestock and its asset ranking. The head placed it as 'the poorest'. The head and his sister are involved in wage labour. The disintegration of the household makes it difficult to assess changes. The EHRS suggest moving into poverty in terms of perception and consumption, but not livestock. However, this is based on the household prior to the head's death. The current livestock (only three goats and a chicken) make the household very poor. The only contentment measure was the GHS which gave the low score. From the interviews it is clear that the sister is unhappy with her brother, who she sees as lazy, and relations between them do not seem to be good, and both he and she are struggling, working for others to make ends meet. The case illustrates how the death of the head can lead to fragmentation of the household and impoverishment. The difference between the low GHS and ERHS decline on the one hand and the RANS subjective sense of improvement may be related to the head sense of becoming independent.

Case 6: Poor elderly woman: Household 074 was composed of a single female head aged 69. Her daughter left to live with her father in 1992. The household was established 30 years ago. The woman came from an average land owning family in the imperial period, and retained an average status during the Därg. Her land was confiscated by the *Qäbäle* in 1996 and she has appealed without success. She had no livestock. The SLG placed her as richer than most in imperial and Därg periods, declining to about average in the early EPRDF period, and gradually moving over the past ten years to 'among the poorest'. She had her cow and calf stolen in 1997. Her granddaughter left five years ago and her son lives far away.

This elderly woman is clearly among the poorest, without land or livestock and at the bottom of the asset index. She suggests that she is 'much worse' than five years and one year ago, but does not appear in the ERHS comparison between 1994 and 2004, possibly because she was already poor, had no livestock and low consumption. Whereas the SLG shows a gradual decline to the poorest, which agrees with the objective data, the CG shows a sudden decline when her granddaughter left, but does not continue declining below 3, suggesting that even the poorest might not have rock bottom contentment. Perhaps unsurprisingly the GHS was 3 or 'not so happy', which fits with her sense of loneliness. She explained the decline in terms of growing old and lacking any kin to help. She also said that people were malicious towards her, and that her unsuccessful land litigation had been a drain on her strength and wealth.

Interpretation

Considering the two cases who claimed retrospectively that their status had changed the household of the young man was found to have declined in objective terms in the ERHS after his father's death and the disintegration of the household; his subjective sense of

improvement despite being very poor and the objective decline may be related to his having become independent. The old woman lived on her own, without land, livestock or kin. Her land was confiscated, her livestock stolen and her granddaughter left her. Here contentment score was in the lowest category; her contentment graph showed a steep drop when her grand-daughter left revealing the impact of lack of help and loneliness, but did not reach rock bottom suggesting that she is not desperately unhappy.

Poor household in 2004 whose status had not changed

The following poor household was selected for having stated in the RANS that there was 'no change' in the household's fortune since five years earlier.

Case 7: Poor elderly man: Household 066 was composed of a single man aged 60. His father had been a rich landlord with tenants. He had land during the Därg but returned most of it when he was unable to pay taxes. He had 0.5 hectare of land and no livestock. He had been ill and was living with his ageing mother until she died in 2001, and thereafter became destitute, giving his land out to sharecroppers. The RANS self-assessment suggested that the household had remained poor, though the SLG shows a drop from the richest in imperial times, to 'about average' in the early Därg period, another drop to 'poorer than most' in the late Därg period, a further drop to 'among the poorest' in the early EPRDF period and gradual decline over the past ten years to 'the poorest'. His contentment over the past ten years was below average at 4 out of 10 dropping to 3 gradually. His GHS score was 3 or 'not too happy'.

The household is clearly among the poorest without livestock and very little land given out to sharecroppers. His standard of living declined gradually from the richest to the poorest and his contentment was low and declined over the past decade. His disability, lack of assets, having to look after an ageing blind mother and being alone after her death, all contributed to his unhappiness, reflected in the bottom GHS score.

Interpretation

The household head claimed that there was no recent change. However, over the longer term the SLG suggests that he has experienced a slow decline since imperial times and a further decline to destitution recently. This suggests that a graph may provide a better sense of the dynamics and longer term change than a question about retrospective assessment of change over a short period of five years or a simple happiness question.

Household among the poorest in 2004 in terms of assets

This case was selected for being among the poorest in the Asset Index. The household head emphasised that without oxen he could not prosper. However, since he had basic agricultural tools he was able to engage in wage labour, which may be the first step out of poverty.

Case 8: Poor young man: Household 023 had three members; a man aged 18, his wife also aged 18 and their 3 years old daughter. He set up his own household 15 years ago, divorced after two years and returned to his father's household. He remarried but his second wife's illness led to a divorce. He married his current wife six years ago. He had a hectare of land. His livestock included 1 cow and 1 bull but no oxen. His assets included an axe, a sickle, a spade, a plough, a bed, cutlery, crockery, pots, a jerry can and a mat. The head ranked the household as 'among the poorest', which may be fairly accurate. The household declined significantly according to the ERHS objective data, but not the self assessment.

The head viewed the household as being 'the same as five years ago' but 'much better' than a year ago. The SLG showed a fall from average during the Därg to 'the poorest' in the early EPRDF period and a slight improvement to 'a little poorer than most' in 2000, and a further improvement in the last couple of years. His contentment in the CG dropped with his divorce and rose sharply with his remarriage.

The household seems to be fairly poor without irrigated land, little livestock, and a very low asset rank. Without oxen, he cannot plough his land on time. He hoped his young calf would become an ox soon. However, he mentioned some improvement due to good harvests, involvement in daily labour, and the cow that his new hard-working wife brought, and her income from spinning cotton.

Interpretation

Despite limited assets and a decline according to the objective data, the household head suggested that there was no change since five years ago and even a significant improvement in the last year, and the SLG shows an improvement in the last two years. The CG shows big changes, with a decrease to very low at the time of divorce and living alone, with a steady rise to almost the top of the scale. This case clearly illustrates the importance of cohesive spousal relations for economic improvement and happiness and the depressing nature of divorce and living alone. Although this household is still a little poorer than most the happiness has soared after the head's latest remarriage. The improvement recently which might not have been registered in the ERHS and the very high contentment might explain why this household did not see itself as moving into poverty in terms of self perception. The middle GHS does not do justice to the significant improvement noticeable in the CG.

Asset rich but livestock and land poor household in 2004

The following household was selected as being asset rich, though its limited land and livestock actually place it among the very poor.

Case 9: Young poor man: Household 190 had 3 members, headed by a man aged 20, with a wife aged 16 and a baby daughter. He was a former domestic labourer in a rich household and set up his own household only in 2004. He had only 0.37 hectare of land and no livestock. In terms of assets he had 2 axes, 1 hoe, 2 sickles, a bed, cutlery, crockery, a kettle, pots, necklace, a jerry can, and a mat. He noted that he needed the tools to work as a daily labourer; and his wife spun cotton for sale; however, he lacked a plough and oxen that he considered the most basic assets. He placed himself as 'a little poorer than most'. He considered himself 'a lot poorer' than his father, but was unable to judge in comparison with five years ago as he was then a servant. However, he seems himself as better off than a year ago. The SLG shows a decline under the Därg, and a rise to 'richer than most' over the past ten years till 2004 when it dropped again to 'among the poorest' and further to 'the poorest' in 2005. The CG was not filled in while he was a servant but is at the top of the scale at 10 in the past two years.

The household is poor in terms of land and has no livestock, though it seems to be rich in terms of assets. The view of him being in the 'richer than most' category is misleading as this represents his masters' wealth status. The drop from 2004 to 2005 to poorest might relate to his wife being pregnant and unable to work and he had to borrow oxen and buy grain.

Interpretation

Given the key importance of ploughing this case might suggest that an asset index should be weighted, and needs to consider land, access to irrigation and livestock, and distinguish between productive and other assets. This case also clearly shows how someone at the bottom of the standard of living scale can be at the top of the contentment scale. He is very happy at having set up his own household and his wife giving birth. The GHS of 'fairly happy' does not pick up on this high contentment.

Poor yet happy in 2004

This case is somewhat exceptional as a poor household with a 'very happy' GHS. It is noteworthy that none of the very poor nor any of the others in the poor category had this top happiness score.

Case 10: poor young man: Household 056 had five members headed by a man aged 20, with a wife and three sisters. The family were living with his father who was described as a drunkard and careless leading to them facing food shortages. His mother divorced him and came to live with her brother bringing the children. When her brother died she inherited the land but she herself died two years ago. The younger sisters went back to live with their father, but three sisters stayed with their brother who got married. The household had 1.5 hectare of land, none irrigated. The livestock included a bull. The household was ranked as poor and ranked itself 'among the poorest' and 'much worse off' than five years ago and 'a little worse off' than a year ago, and poorer than his father. The SLG showed a decline from about average until 2003 and a sharp drop to the poorest in 2004. However, the head mentioned that things were getting better as they had enough land and some livestock. The CG showed a drop from average to 1 but the GHS was 'very happy'.

This household's status has declined after the break-up of the household following divorce and death of the father, the conversion of the mother to Islam - which the head was not happy about - the move to her brother's who died and her subsequent death. However, despite the poverty the household head is young has some inherited assets has married and has the help of sisters.

Interpretation

The head expressed a perception of decline after the disintegration of the household with some recent improvement, and a contentment that dropped from average to low, perhaps reflecting grieving over the mother's death, from which the head said the younger children were still suffering. The contrasting high happiness score may reflect the head's contentment with his recent marriage and a hopeful outlook given inherited assets and a good labour profile.

Conclusions

The discussion of terms suggests that the destitute are seen as merely being extremely poor, rather than different or separate from the rest of society. Characterisations of the destitute by others and by themselves were broadly similar. They lacked livestock and basic assets, having no land or very little, often limited to the household plot, faced food shortages and reduced meals. They had a house, which, however, was small and in poor condition. They often suffered from poor health, chronic illness, notably loss of hearing and eyesight often associated with ageing. They tended to live on their own or only with a spouse, lacking helpers. Though they were unable to afford to join *addar* funeral

associations, they were not deliberately excluded from social institutions. The Christian women were part of *māhabār* religious associations and the Muslim women were part of neighbourhood coffee groups. Some worked as daily labourers, others collected and sold firewood; some men were involved in weaving and women in spinning to earn income. They relied heavily on neighbours, kin and friends and borrowed food, utensils, and grain, sometimes having to pay back double in kind after the harvest. The most significant difference between the views of the non-destitute and their own self-perceptions related to their attitudes. Whereas many of the non-destitute thought they experienced hopelessness and did not believe they could escape poverty, most of the destitute hoped to improve their lives notably by obtaining more land and some prayed for food, health to work hard, or money to change their lives.

In considering poverty dynamics factors involved in decline included ageing, disability, notably loss of hearing and eyesight, shocks such as house burning, theft of assets, notably livestock, and for widows having their land confiscated after their husband's death. Loss of support due to children or grandchildren leaving was also mentioned by the elderly. Many of the destitute are elderly women and the contrast with a younger poor female headed household whose condition was improving highlights the problem of ageing.

However, an analysis of factors leading to destitution in isolation can miss combinations of factors, oversimplify complex processes, and overlook the actors' subjective rationalisations. Death of parents leading to family splitting resulting in decline in living standards brings out this point most clearly. Despite poverty a high contentment was expressed by young newly-established household heads reflecting satisfaction at becoming independent and setting up their own household, whereas the elderly seemed more prone to dissatisfaction.

Subjective measures of contentment may also be more a reflection of social relations notably marriage and divorce, and poor young men who have married and had children seem to express high contentment. Subjective views of contentment though clearly interlinked with material conditions may thus be somewhat independent from subjective standard of living assessments and objective factors and may be subject to greater fluctuations relating to life events.

In methodological terms the experience of this exploratory study suggests that Standard of Living and Contentment Graphs provide a richer and more dynamic picture than one-off measures such as the Global Happiness Score which only allows for three scores and may reflect mood or the view at the interview time. Graphs may also provide a better sense of intermediate change than retrospective questions comparing the household's status with five years ago, or comparing self assessments at intervals. Together with open-ended discussion they may provide a better sense of the processes involved. The Standard of Living Graph considered changes over three regimes, and can provide a sense of longer term change which can complement questions about comparisons with the parental generation. The findings also suggest the need for caution in using unweighted asset indices that do not include land and livestock, and the need to concentrate on productive assets.

The approach explored in this study could be improved through a more interactive discussion with respondents using a combination of methods involving panel objective and subjective data, along with graphs and timelines. This could provide better insights into their lives and household histories over longer periods of time taking account of household development cycles, key events and shocks to understand the extent to which

destitution is inherited, and the processes and means by which households can be locked into or move out of poverty.

References

- Aspen, Harald. 2003. *Faces of Poverty; Life in Gäta, Wälo*. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Bevan, Philippa and Bereket Kebede. 1996. 'Measuring wealth and poverty in rural Ethiopia: a data-based discussion'. In: *The Ethiopian Economy Poverty and Poverty Alleviation. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Conference on the Ethiopian Economy*. Addis Ababa: Department of Economics, Addis Ababa University and Ethiopian Economics Association, pp. 03-124.
- Dercon, Stefan. 2004. 'Growth and shocks: Evidence from rural Ethiopia.' *Journal of Development Economics* vol. 74 (2), pp. 309-329.
- Dercon, Stefan and Pramila Krishnan. 1996. 'A consumption-based measure of poverty for rural Ethiopia in 1989 and 1994'. In: *The Ethiopian Economy Poverty and Poverty Alleviation. Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Conference on the Ethiopian Economy*. Addis Ababa: Department of Economics, Addis Ababa University and Ethiopian Economics Association, pp 77-102.
- Dercon, Stefan and John Hoddinott. 2005. 'Poverty and perceptions of wellbeing in fifteen Ethiopian villages, "Happiness in 15 Ethiopian villages"'. Unpublished paper.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1976. *Concise Amharic dictionary*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Kane, Thomas 1990. *Amharic - English dictionary. Volume 1 & 2*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Pankhurst Alula and Philippa Bevan. 2004. 'Hunger and poverty in Ethiopia: local perceptions of famine and famine response.' *Humanitarian Exchange* no. 27, pp.2-5.
- Sharp, Kay, Stephen Devereux and Yared Amare. 2003. *Destitution in the Northeastern Highlands (Amhara Region)*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex; Addis Ababa: Save the Children UK Ethiopia.
- Tassew Woldehanna and Daniel Zerfu. 2002. 'Poverty and macroeconomic policy in Ethiopia', in Meheret Ayenew ed. *Poverty and Poverty Policy in Ethiopia*. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies, pp. 35-61.
- Yared Amare. 2002. *Rural Poverty in Ethiopia. Household Case Studies from North Shewa*. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Yared Amare. 2003. 'Destitution in the North-Eastern Highlands of Ethiopia. Community and Household Studies in Wag Hamra and South Wello.' *FSS Studies on Poverty no.3* Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Wehr, Hans. 1976. *A dictionary of modern written Arabic*. Ithaca: Spoken Language Service.

The Coming of Age of Islamic Studies in Ethiopia: The Present State of Research and Publication

Hussein Ahmed¹

Introduction

Over the past ten years or so, the Arabic and non-Arabic literature on the history of Islam and Muslim culture in Ethiopia produced by indigenous and expatriate scholars has been expanding at a rate that would not have been inconceivable during the imperial era. This is a welcome trend as the subject of Islam in Ethiopia has long been a neglected and marginalized theme in Ethiopian studies. In two earlier contributions, I reviewed both the published and unpublished literature during the half century between 1952, the year that J. Spencer Trimingham's classical book, *Islam in Ethiopia*, came out and 2002.²

Since at least 1993, a large corpus of material (mostly written in Arabic and published within the country by Ethiopian Muslim scholars) has come to light. The purpose of this communication is to introduce this material to Ethiopianist scholars in general, and to researchers interested in the study of the history of Islam and Islamic/Arabic literature in Ethiopia and the Horn in particular. The paper also contains a section on recently-published articles and monographs in English and other European languages (Italian, French and German), and theses (completed and in progress) on Islam in Ethiopia. The coverage is by no means exhaustive and complete. One important source is the Islamic private press. The Islamic newspapers contain short pieces on current events and issues, and on contemporary Islam in the country, especially on Christian-Muslim relations and the occasional inter-communal tensions and conflicts. It is worth noting that out of a dozen or so newspapers which have flourished since 1991, only three – *Quds*, *Salafiya* and *Ġum'a* – are still circulating. An analysis of these writings will offer an insight into the dynamics of religion and shed light on the perspectives of the two religious communities.

Published Books in Arabic

1. *Šayh 'Alī Muhammad Yāsīn, Talhīs al-hisān min kitāb Ibn Haġar al-'Asqalānī fī ahkām al-hadīt* (Addis Ababa: Matba'at al-Naġāšī, n.d.p.), 658 pp.³ (on *Hadīt*)

¹ Addis Ababa University.

² Hussein Ahmed, 'Scholarly Research and Publications on Islam in Ethiopia (1952-2002): An Assessment' in Walter Raunig and Steffen Wenig (eds.), *Afrikas Horn* (Akten der Ersten Internationalen Littmann-Konferenz 2 bis 5 Mai 2002 München) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), pp. 411-426. For an earlier and more comprehensive survey and overview, see my 'The Historiography of Islam in Ethiopia,' *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3, 1 (1992), pp. 15-46.

³ Ibn Haġar al-'Asqalānī (1372-1449) was an Egyptian scholar and author of, *inter alia*, *Fath al-Bārī, al-Durar al-Kāmina* (a biographical dictionary of leading figures of the 8th century), *Tahdīb al-Tahdīb* (an abbreviation of *Tahdīb al-Kamāl fī Asmā' al-Riġāl* [the encyclopaedia of *hadīt* narrators by Yūsuf b. al-Zakkī 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mizzī, d.742 A.H.], *al-Isāba fī tamyīz al-sahāba* (the most widely used dictionary of the Prophet's Companions) and *Bulūġ al-Marām min adillat al-ahkām* (textbook on *Šāfi'ī fiqh*).

2. *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ Abū'l-Qāsim Tāḡaddīn b. Ahmad*,⁴ *Bahḡat mahādir al-aqrān šarh nasīhat al-iḥwān, manzūmat al-imām Ibn al-Wardī ma'a tahmisihā* (Adama: Matba'at Badr, A.H. 1426/2005), 311 pp.⁵ (a commentary on Ibn al-Wardī, it provides general information on theology, the Arabic language and advice)
3. Muhammad Tāḡaddīn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-'Arūsī, *Ta'rīh Ityūbiyā* (Islāmābād: al-Hafīz, A.H. 1419/1999), vol. 1, 375 pp. (an account of the history of Ethiopia)
4. *idem*, *al-minhāḡ al-islāmī fī tarbiya wa'l-ta'līm: dirāsāt tahliliyya* (Islamabad: Ḡāmi'at al-Islāmiyya al-'ālamīyya, 1999), 253 pp. (on Islamic theology and the upbringing of children according to Islam)
5. *idem*, *al-fiqh al-islāmī fī mīzān al-ta'rīh* (Islāmābād: Instant Print System Pvt. Ltd, 2003), 343 pp. (a history of the development of the Šarī'a)
6. *idem*, *fiqh al-ḡihād wa'l-'alāqāt al-dawliyya fī'l-islām* (on the law of the ḡihād and international relations in Islam)
7. *idem*, *'aqīdat al-muslim fī daw' al-kitāb wa'l-sunna*
8. *idem*, *ta'rīh Ityūbiyā bayna'l-madī wa'l-hādir* (a history of Ethiopia)
9. *idem*, *nubdat 'an-hayāt al-'allāma b. Bāz* ⁶ (a biographical work)
10. *idem*, *al-duktūr Nasīf waḡūhudihi fī hidmat al-islām wa'l-muslimīn* (an account of the life Dr. 'Abdallāh Nasīf ⁷)
11. *Al-Šayh Muhammad Wāle b. al-Hāḡḡ Ahmad b. 'Umar*, *Kitāb Iqāz humam al-aḡbiyā' birašh qitrat min tarāḡim al-'ulamā' wa'l-awliyā' fī ḡumhuriyat Ityūbiyā* (Addis Ababa: Mu'ssasat al-Naḡāšī li'l-taba'āt wa'l-našr wa'l-tasḡilāt al-islāmiyya, *Ramadhān* 1425), I, 328 pp. (biographies of Ethiopian Muslim scholars and saints).⁸
12. _____, *al-muqaddima al-latīfa 'alā madhab abī hanīfa* (Addis Ababa: Mu'asassat al-Naḡāšī li'l-našr wa'l-tasḡilāt al-islāmiyya, *Raḡab* 1422/1993), 186 pp. (on *Fiqh*)
13. *Šayh 'Abd al-Qādir Ahmad Fito al-'Arūsī*, *Sifāt al-Dā'iyyat al-Nāsīh fī daw' al-kitāb wa'l-sunna* (Islāmābād: Instant Print System (Pvt) Ltd., pp. 134 (on *da'wa*, the Islamic Call)
14. 'Abd al-Bāsīt b. Muhammad b. Hasan al-Būrānī al-Mināsī, *Mudnī al-habīb mimman yuwālī muḡnī al-labīb* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-kutub al-taqāfiyya and Addis Ababa: Maktabat Mus'ab b. 'Umayr li'l-tabā'a wa'l-našr wa'l-tawzī', AH 1424/2003), 150 pp. (a work on Arabic grammar and syntax).
15. _____, *Fath al-qarīb al-muḡīb fī šarh kitāb mudnī al-habīb mimman yuwālī* (1424/2003), vol. 1, 702 pp. (on language)
16. _____, vol. 2, 677 pp.
17. _____, *Fath al-karīm al-latīf, šarh arḡūza al-tasrīf*, 1426/2005), 528 pp. (on morphology)

⁴ A contemporary 'ālim from Wālo and author of an Arabic biographical dictionary on Ethiopian Muslim scholars and saints entitled *I'lām al-aḡbiyā' bihayāt 'uzamā' Ityūbiyā min al-'ulamā' wa'l-awliyā' wa'l-salātīn al-islām wa'l-asfiyā'*. Its long overdue publication has been a cause of grave concern for the public and scholarly community.

⁵ Ibn al-Wardī: *fl.* 1290-1349.

⁶ 'Abd al-'Azīz b. 'Abdullāh b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. 'Abdullāh b. Bāz (1909-1999) was the grand *mufī* of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

⁷ Onetime president of King 'Abd al-'Azīz University in Jeddah, KSA.

⁸ See my review in *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* (?)

18. Muhammad Amīn b. ‘Abdullāh al-It̥yūbī al-Hararī, *al-bākūra al-ḡaniyya min qitāf matn al-bayqūniyya* (Addis Ababa: Maktabat Mus‘ab b. ‘Umayr al-islāmiyya and Beirut: Mu‘asassat al-kutub al-taqāfiyya, 1326/2005), 123 pp. (a work on *Hadīth*).
19. ———, *al-bākūra al-ḡaniyya min qitf i ‘rāb al-aḡarrūmiyya*⁹ (Addis Ababa: Maktabat Mus‘ab b. ‘Umayr al-islāmiyya, 1424/2003, vol.1, 266 pp. (on language)
20. ———, *Tahnik al-Atfāl ‘alā lāmiyyat al-af‘āl* (also on language)
21. Muhammad al-Tayyib b. Muhammad b. Yūsuf al-Yūsufī, *It̥yūbiyā wa ‘-‘Urūba wa ‘l-islām ‘abr al-ta ‘rīh* (Mecca: al-Maktabat al-Makkiyya 1416/1996), 2 vols., I, 384 pp., II, pp. (on relations between Ethiopia, Arabism and Islam) [?]
22. Sayid Muhammad Sādiq, *Manhal al-‘Atšān fī ta ‘rīh al-Hubšān* (San‘ā’, 2001), 436 pp. (a general history of Ethiopia from pre-Islamic times to the twentieth century).

Published Articles and Conference Papers

- Alessandro Gori, “Contemporary and Historical Muslim Scholars as Portrayed by the Ethiopian Islamic Press in the 1990s.” *Aethiopica: International Journal of Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies*, vol.8 (2005), pp. 72-94.
- Eloi Ficquet, “Une apologie éthiopienne de l’islam,” *Annales d’Éthiopie*, XVIII (2002), pp. 7-35.
- Hussein Ahmed, “Coexistence and/or Confrontation?: Towards a Reappraisal of Christian-Muslim Encounter in Contemporary Ethiopia,” *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 36,1 (2006), pp. 4-22.
- “The State and Islam in Ethiopia, 850-1995 A.D.” in Abdu B.K. Kasozi and Sadik Ünay (eds.), *Islamic Civilisation in Eastern Africa* (Proceedings of the International Symposium, Kampala, Uganda, 15-17 December 2003) (Istanbul: Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), 2006), pp. 39-60.
- “*Waqf*-land in Nineteenth-Century Wällo (Ethiopia)” in Donald Crummey (ed.), *Land, Literacy and the State in Sudanic Africa* (Trenton/Asmara: The Red Sea Press Inc., 2005), pp. 241-250.
- “*Shaykh* Jawhar b. Haydar b. ‘Alī: A Mystic and Scholar from Shonkē, southeast Wallo, Ethiopia,” *AE*, XX (2004), pp. 47-56.
- “Italian Colonial Policy Towards Islam in Ethiopia and the Responses of Ethiopian Muslims (1936-1941)” (a paper read at the international conference on ‘Africa Orientale Italians sessant’anni dopo’, Cagliari, Italy, 30 November to 01 December 2006) (proceedings forthcoming).
- Ahmed Hassen Omer, “Some Notes on Harar and the Local Trade Routes: A Report on the View of ex-merchants of Shāwa (1839-1935),” *AE*, XVII (2001), pp. 141-149.
- Franz-Christoph Muth, “Allahs Netze: ‘Arabfaqihs *Futūh al-Habasha* als Quelle für Netzwerkanalysen,” *AE*, XVII (2001), pp. 113-125.
- David Vô Vân, “À propos du ḡihād dans le *Futuh al-Habasha*. De la lecture d’Alfred Morabia à la relecture d’Arab-Faqih,” *AE*, XVII (2001), pp. 127-139.

⁹ Ibn ‘Abdallāh Muhammad b. Aḡarrūm al-Sanhāḡī (1273-1323), author of *Muqaddima*, a standard work on Arabic grammar.

Joachim Crass & Ronny Meyer, "The Qabena and the Wolane: Two peoples of the Gurage region and their respective histories according to their own oral traditions," *AE*, XVII (2001), pp. 175-182.

M.A. Theses completed at Addis Ababa University (1992-2006/07)

History

Abbas Ahmed, "A Historical Study of the City-State of Harar (1795-1875)"

Aman Seifedin, "Islam and the Muslim Community in Gommaa: A Historical Survey (1886-1974)"

Bawer Oumer, "The Development of Islamic Propagation (Da'wa) in Addis Ababa and its Surroundings (1936-2003)"

Endalew Djirata, "Islam and the Muslim Community in the Kingdom of Jimma (1870s-1941)"

Tadesse Semma, "The Origin and Development of Jimma Town up to 1942"

Philology

Mohammed Seid Abdella,¹⁰ "The Contribution of *Muftī* Dāwūd (1743-1819) to Islamic Intellectual Development in Ethiopia: A Historical research on a Local Philological Heritage"

Oumer Mekonnen, "An Arabic Hagiography from Gojjam"

Endris Mohammed, "Historical Insights and National Consciousness in Selected Philological Legacies of *Shaykh* Sayid Muhammad Sādiq (1897-1977)" (later published)

Muna Abubeker, "Gender Issues in Sigil 'register' and *Dīwān* 'chancery' of Harar Town in the 19th Century"

Nureddin Delil, "A Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts of Abret *Shaykh*"

Mohammed Hakim, "A Philological Enquiry into Ahmad *Shaykh* Sirāj's '*Ajamī* Oromo *Manzūma*'"

Abdulkerim Seid, "*Shaykh* Ibrahim 'Ali and his Philological Works: A Content Analysis with particular emphasis on his political, cultural and social writings"

Hussein Mohammed, "Sufism according to *Shaykh* Jamal al-Din al-Anni"

Kemal Abdulwehab, "A Catalogue of *Mujahid* Talha Ja'far's '*Ajamī* MSS'"

Books and Monographs

Hussein Ahmed, *Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia: Revival, Reform and Reaction* (Leiden, 2001)

Haggai Erlich, *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity and Politics Entwined* (Boulder, CO./London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2007)

Alessandro Gori, *Contatti culturali nell'Oceano Indiano e nel Mar Rosso e processi di Islamizzazione in Etiopia e Somalia* (Venezia: Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, 2006)

Terje Østebø, *A History of Islam and inter-religious relations in Bale, Ethiopia* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiskell International, 2005)

¹⁰ Wrote an earlier M.A. thesis in Arabic on the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century history of Ethiopia which he submitted to the University of Tripoli, Libya in 2001.

Doctoral Theses

- Éloi Ficquet, “Du Barbare au Mystique: anthropologie historique et recompositions identitaires et religieuses dans le Wällo (Éthiopie centrale)” (thèse de doctorat, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2001)
- Ahmed Hassen Omer, “Islam, commerce et politique dans l’Ifat (Éthiopie centrale) au XIXe siècle: l’émergence d’une ville carrefour, Aleyyu Amba” (Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2007)
- Terje Østebø, “Islam and Locality: Religious Change among the Muslim Oromo of Bale, Ethiopia” (to be submitted to the Department of Comparative Religion, University of Stockholm)

Islam in Ethiopia at the International Conferences of Ethiopian Studies (1959-2007)

As the table below clearly shows, the representation of Islam in the sixteen conferences held so far ranges from total absence to a modest increase in the number of papers, reaching its peak at the present conference. At the first, second and seventh conferences, there were no papers on Islam. There were three contributions each at the third, fourth and fifth conferences, but only one was read at the sixth. At the eighth conference, six papers were presented. Two papers were read at the ninth congress but only one at the tenth. At the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth conferences, four, six and five papers were read respectively, while to the fourteenth and fifteenth conferences, three and five were presented respectively.

At the current conference, out of a total of 13 registered papers, 11 are expected to be presented, the highest number of papers on Islam ever delivered at an international conference of Ethiopian studies.

Conference	No. of papers on Islam presented
First (Rome, 1959)	0
Second (Manchester, 1963)	0
Third (Addis Ababa, 1966)	3
Fourth (Rome, 1972)	3
Fifth (Nice, Chicago, 1977/78)	3
Sixth (Tel-Aviv, 1980)	1
Seventh (Lund, 1982)	0
Eighth (Addis Ababa, 1984)	6
Ninth (Moscow, 1986)	2
Tenth (Paris, 1988)	1
Eleventh (Addis Ababa, 1991)	4
Twelfth (East Lansing, 1994)	6
Thirteenth (Kyoto, 1997)	5
Fourteenth (Addis Ababa, 2000)	3
Fifteenth (Hamburg, 2003)	5
Sixteenth (Trondheim, 2007)	11

The first two volumes of the *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* have about 90 and 63 entries, respectively, on Islam in Ethiopia. The third, volume (2007) contains approximately 106 entries on Islam in Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea, and on Islam in general.

Conclusion

The present paper has shown that over the last ten or so years, research and publications on Islam in Ethiopia have registered an impressive progress in terms of geographical and thematic coverage (central, southern and eastern Ethiopia), a growing focus on regional and contemporary Islam – Wällo, Ġimma, Arsi, Bali and Harär – rather than on institutional and historical Islam in Ethiopia as a whole. (A comprehensive history of Islam, which will finally supersede Trmingham’s work which was published fifty-five years ago, has yet to appear.) Mysticism and recent trends of religiosity have received considerable attention.¹¹ Occasional tensions within the Muslim community and with other religious communities in Ethiopia, and the impact of reformist and radical Islam, especially after 9/11, have led to growing interest in the study of contemporary Islam. However, the publications reflect more the perceptions, misconceptions and personal impressions of their authors than the Ethiopian reality. Above all, they were heavily influenced by the Western post-cold war paradigm based on the perceived threat of Islam.

In the Ethiopian context, the growing corpus of works on the history of Ethiopia, Islamic law, grammar and biographies written by indigenous scholars is a result of the post-1991 liberalization of state policy towards literary production in the country. An innovation in this respect which has had a profound and positive impact on the dissemination of religious knowledge is the appearance of a number of Islamic publishing houses and bookshops both in the capital and the major towns. They have printed many books and booklets some of which are beginning to be used as textbooks, are enjoying wide circulation, and are more accessible and affordable than those imported from outside. Gone are the days when Ethiopian ‘*ulamā*’ used to labour day and night copying by hand texts acquired from the Muslim world. Gone also are the days when manuscripts which could not be published because of censorship or absence of local Islamic publishers, and were exposed to damage or were lost while passing through private hands.

Another characteristic feature of contemporary Islamic literature in Ethiopia is, as has been the case with that of the traditional one, the use of classical Arabic as a medium of literary composition. With few exceptions – such as the works of *Shaykh* Talha b. Ja‘far (c.1853-1936) and *al-Hāğğ* Muhammad Tānī b. Habīb (1914-1989) – all Ethiopian Muslim scholars wrote in Arabic because of their proficiency in that language and their limited knowledge of written Amharic. The only handicap of these works is that their readership was restricted to members of the elite conversant in Arabic, although the latter often make impromptu translations into Amharic in the course of teaching and during religious and social gatherings.

All the above developments – the rapidly-expanding and increasing local production of published works composed by Ethiopian Muslim scholars, and growing diversity of

¹¹ On the latter, see my “Competing Claims to Orthodoxy: the Wāhhābiyya and Mainstream Islam in Ethiopia” (a paper presented to the international conference on ‘Islam and Hinduism in the Indian Ocean World: Global Trends and Local Practices,’ University of California at Los Angeles, 15-16 April 2005), and “The *Da‘wa* (Islamic Call) Movement and Religious Identity in Ethiopia from the 1980s to the Present” (a paper read at the international workshop on ‘New Religiosity and Inter-Generational Conflict in Northeast Africa’, Halle, Germany, 26-28 April 2006).

fields of research and accessibility of research findings to the scholarly community – show that the study of Islam, by both Ethiopians and foreigners, has indeed come of age. Sustaining and building on this welcome trend will be the task of the present and the next generations of young researchers and scholars.

The Grandchildren of Abraha¹

Haggai Erlich²

From the very birth of Islam Muslims have had dual conceptualization of Ethiopia as a Christian-led state. On the one hand they quite uniquely accepted her legitimacy, on the other they aspired for her Islamization. The most radical expression of the latter was the ancient tradition that the Ethiopians are self-destined to destroy the Ka'aba. The December 2006 Ethiopian invasion and toppling of the Islamic radical government in Mogadishu put Ethiopia again, and most strongly on the agenda of the Muslim world. Voices from all over, it seems, tend to demonize her resorting to that tradition.

The process of Ethiopia's redefinition, which began in the 1990s, is still in full momentum. Its two main inter-related aspects, ethnic decentralization and religious pluralization, are generating multidimensional changes and provoking all sorts of sensitivities. We are definitely witnessing a period of transformation. Its direction, however, is still blurred. In this short paper, I should like to address the Islamic dimension only, and from the prism of its current Middle Eastern aspects. I shall do so by examining Ethiopia's image in the aftermath of her December 2006 invasion of Somalia, and the expulsion of the government of the Union of Islamic Courts from Mogadishu.

Islam's Dual Conceptualization of Ethiopia

At the risk of repeating myself, let me briefly mention that, from its inception, Islam developed a dual conceptualization of Ethiopia.³ On one hand, it viewed her in positive terms as a neighbor deserving gratitude for saving the persecuted pioneers of Islam, the "*sahaba*" of the Prophet, and therefore a legitimate entity in spite of her Christian culture. On the other hand, Ethiopia has been conceived in negative terms: A country, which, already in the days of the Prophet, joined the "land of Islam," but then revolted and returned to Christianity. Through that second prism, Ethiopia was a land of the ultimate heresy, *Irtad*; namely, being a Muslim and then betraying Islam. In the eyes of Islamic radicals, Ethiopia could therefore be redeemed only by full restoration as part of the land of Islam.

Throughout history, whenever Ethiopia appeared on Middle Eastern Muslims' agenda, they discussed her in these dichotomous terms. This argument, needless to say, did not relate only to the Ethiopian "other," but also to the Islamic "self." The discussion of Ethiopia among Muslims is perhaps more heated today than ever before.

¹ The research for this article was supported by the Israeli Science Foundation, Grant 613/06. I am also grateful to Dr. Avraham Hakim, Dr. Moshe Tordman, and Dr. Mustafa Kabha for their help.

² Tel Aviv University and the Open University of Israel.

³ This paragraph is based on my three books, *Ethiopia and the Middle East*, Boulder 1994; *The Cross and the River, Ethiopia, Egypt, and the Nile*, Boulder 2003; *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia – Islam, Christianity and Politics Entwined*, Boulder 2007.

Moreover, it is now spilling over into Ethiopia proper, having a direct impact on the country's Muslims, and influencing their attitudes towards her redefinition.

The reservoir of Islamic concepts legitimizing Ethiopia, even as a Christian dominated state, is rich and unique. The legacy of the Christian "*najashi*" saving the "*sahaba*" has been canonized and recycled. Vast literature has been produced presenting and re-interpreting Ethiopia as a model of universal humanity and grace. One major aspect of this legacy is the notion that Muslims can live under non-Islamic governments, provided that these governments are just; namely, that they allow Muslims to freely observe their religion. In the eyes of many, the precedent of the Prophet's ordering the first believers to live under the benevolent Christian king of Ethiopia today legitimizes living in Europe, the US, and even in Jewish Israel, provided, of course, that they are progressive and permissive towards Islam. It surely legitimizes living in Ethiopia proper, on condition that religious equality is implemented. For the sake of brevity, I shall refrain from dwelling here on this pragmatic, moderate interpretation of Islam and of Ethiopia. It should be emphasized, however, that the overwhelming majority of Muslims in Ethiopia apparently view the dialogue between their religion and their Ethiopian-ness in these flexible terms.

This is also not the place to elaborate on all the concepts of Ethiopia stemming from Islamic radicalism. Here again, examples are abundant, as the call for the victory of Islam in Ethiopia has been repeated throughout and from all quarters – from Arabia, Egypt, Sudan, and from within the Horn of Africa. The latest declaration of Jihad on Ethiopia was pronounced by the Islamic militants of the Union of Islamic Courts who took over the government of Somalia in June 2006.

The literature de-legitimizing Ethiopia produced over the years by Islamic radicals is as diverse as the moderate publications. Christian Ethiopians were depicted as barbarous infidels, as enemies and oppressors of Islam and Muslims, and as "the worst of human beings in the eyes of God on the day of insurrection." However, the most extreme demonization of Ethiopia was the story of Abraha and the Ka'aba.

Destroyers of the Ka'aba – A Demonic, Marginal Image

Aksumite Ethiopia occupied Yemen between 524 and 590.⁴ Its Ethiopian ruler, Abraha al-Ashram (Abraha, the "scar-face"), was said to have raided Mecca in 570 (the year the Prophet was born) in order to destroy the Ka'aba and to divert all attention to a church he had built in San'a. The Ka'aba, as attested by the "Sura of the Elephant" in the Koran, was miraculously saved from the Ethiopians as Allah "sent against them birds in flocks (*abablis*)...who hurled clay stones upon them."⁵

The image of the Ethiopians as the ultimate enemies of Islam was consequently preserved in a *hadith*, a saying attributed to the Prophet: "A lean-legged from among the Ethiopians [*dhu al-suwayqatayn*] will [eventually] destroy the Ka'aba."⁶ This saying (though based on a historical twist, for the Ka'aba was a polytheistic shrine at that time)

⁴ For a succinct summary of relations between Aksumite Ethiopia and the Arab Peninsula, see Stuart Munro-Hay, "Arabia – Relations in ancient times," in Siegbert Uhlig (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, vol. I, Hamburg 2003, pp. 294-300. See also the bibliography at the end of the item.

⁵ The Sura of the Elephant: "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful / Hast thou not seen how Lord dealt with the army of the Elephant? / Did he not cause their stratagem to miscarry? / And he sent against them birds in flocks (*abablis*) / Clay stones did not hurl down upon them, / And he made them like stubble eaten down."

⁶ See, al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, vol. 2, pp. 577-599 (ed. al-Bagha), Beirut 1997; Muslim, *Sahih*, vol. 4, p. 2232 (ed. 'Abd al-Baqi), Beirut 1983.

can be found all six traditional compilations of *hadith*, and, most importantly, in the earliest and the most revered ones, those of al-Bukhari and Muslim. It was therefore embedded in Islamic consciousness and widely accepted as absolutely authentic. However, probably because of its extreme message, the saying has mainly been quoted by radicals. The concept, it can be argued, reflected a hidden fear of mysterious, black Africans, as well as of the Day of Judgment that the Ethiopians' disastrous destructiveness would herald.

A search of Islamic literature that recycled this tradition indeed reveals a chain of radicals. From a book composed in Bahdad in 844, *Kitab al-Fitan* (The Book of Heresies), by Nu'aym ibn Hammad, to Muhammad Zabiyan's *Muslim Ethiopia*, Damascus 1937. From the Syrian medieval Islamic scholar, Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328), the spiritual founder of Sunni fundamentalism and the father figure of today's radicalism,⁷ to Egyptian Muhammad Rajab who stated in his 1985 book, *The Political Relations between the Muslims of Zayla and the Christians of Ethiopia in the Middle Ages*,⁸ that, in this saying, the Prophet warned the Muslims against Ethiopia and its anti-Muslim fanaticism (pp. 31-38). The semi-mythical story was repeated in Saudi school textbooks and recycled by various journalists. For example, on 20 July 1998, *al-'Alam al-Islami*, the weekly of the Muslim World League, the international, Mecca-based Saudi organization tasked with spreading and defending Islam, published a long article under the headline: "The biggest campaign of Christianizing Muslims in East Africa: Camps for the liquidation of Muslims' faith in Ethiopia." It opened with the narrative of the Ethiopians' aborted sixth century attempt to destroy the Ka'aba and their ensuing betrayal of the Muslim *Najashi*.⁹

The polarized, intra-Islamic discussion of Ethiopia, as mentioned, has always been re-ignited by concrete international issues. From the Ahmad Gragn conquest of Ethiopia, to the modern conflicts with Khedival Egypt, from the Sudanese Mahdiyya, to the conquest of Mussolini, through the challenges of Nasserism, the Eritrean problem, the Ogaden War, etc. Time and again, the initial dichotomy, first molded during the formative period of the Prophet, was readdressed. While pragmatists and moderates advocated remembering the initial Ethiopian rescue of Islam, the militants preferred to remember the betrayal. However, it was only the most radical who mentioned the ultimate demonization, the tradition that the Ethiopians were destined to destroy the Ka'aba. Closer to our time, this was sometimes referred to by radical Islamists in their campaigns against the moderates. In October 2001, for example, an article on a Jihadi website argued that the moderate Muslims, namely those who were betraying the true Islam by following the infidels, would eventually try to destroy the Ka'aba. Their effort will herald the appearance of the "lean-legged Ethiopians" who will complete the destruction, "will leave no stone on the other, and will steal all that is in the Ka'aba until not even one believer is left and the Ka'aba will remain destroyed forever, as we were told in Al-Bukhari."¹⁰ "All the infidels are one nation," reasserted the Saudi, Muhammad al-Shidawi in October 2002, "from Abraha al-Asram to Bush and Sharon."¹¹ In April 2004, on another website, a Saudi writer warned against the Shiite Iranian threat. "The Zionists," he stated, "are not the worst of enemies; those are the

⁷ Ibn Taymiyya, *Sharh al-'umda*, vol. 4, p. 494, and *Kutub wa-rasa'il*, vol. 27, pp. 355-356.

⁸ See discussion of this in *Ethiopia and the Middle East*, pp. 17, 18, 26, 29.

⁹ See *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia*, pp. 193 and pp. 200-201.

¹⁰ www.almawa.net/index.php?option=content&task=view&idItemid=0

¹¹ www.alsakher.com/vb2/showthread.php?t=47106

Iranians who, like the Ethiopians, will eventually destroy the Ka'aba. For we know that the Prophet told us that the Ka'aba will be destroyed by the lean-legged, and that those Ethiopians, who are destroyers and terrorists, will do so systematically, leaving no stone on the other. And indeed, all enemies of Islam are united – Ethiopians, Iranians, Zionists.”¹²

Restoring and Recycling Demonization – the Radicals

In December 2006, an Ethiopian army invaded Somalia and destroyed the government of the Union of the Islamic Courts in Mogadishu. The concrete issue, its background and strategic implications are beyond our scope here. We shall confine ourselves here to a mere observation as to its historical significance and the first responses in the Muslim world.

Whatever the circumstances or the consequences, the Ethiopian campaign in Somalia will probably be considered one of the major events in Ethiopian-Islamic relations. The history of these relations includes significant landmarks. Many of these junctures were manifestations of mutual aggression. Nothing, however, seems comparable to the new drama surrounding Mogadishu. Though Ethiopia was invaded in the past by Sudanese, Egyptians, Somalis and others, and though the Christian empire conquered and harassed local Islamic communities, the December 2006 Ethiopian invasion is exceptional. It is the first time since the re-emergence of modern Islamic radicalism that Ethiopia provoked political Islam so openly by invading the capital of a modern Islamic state.

The Islamic radicals from all over the world indeed responded harshly. Their actions will not be discussed here, only their words. They began to resort frequently to the ultimate demonization of Ethiopia, namely by recycling of the story of Abraha and the Ka'aba. Their publications and websites are replete with such sentences as: “God, do defeat the aggressors like you destroyed...Abraha... like you destroyed Pharaoh.”¹³ Ibn al-Islam, a Saudi, wrote: “The Arabs should beware and pay attention to the danger exposed by this invasion. The Prophet told us that the Ka'aba would be destroyed by the lean-legged Ethiopians, and I think that Ethiopia's war against the freedom fighters and the lions of Mogadishu is only the beginning of an Ethiopian threat that will be dangerous, especially to Saudi Arabia. Though the Saudis are focusing on the danger from Iran, the greatest danger, as God told us, is from Ethiopia.”¹⁴

Another contributor to an Islamist forum wrote: “The picture is clear... the cursed triangle of infidels, crusaders, and Jews continues to threaten our nation at all times and everywhere. In the past, the crusader Abraha al-Ashram threatened the Ka'aba. Later the Jews and the crusaders conquered Jerusalem, today the USA occupies Afghanistan and Iraq and the Zionists occupy the Holy Land. The grandchildren of Abraha invaded Somalia after having been given a green light by the Americans. They aimed at liquidating the Islamic Courts that were about to unite the hitherto divided Somalis.”¹⁵

The Al-Qaida website, the Reform Forum (*Muntada al-tajdid*) is full of articles and responses in this spirit. Ethiopia is portrayed as a vengeful, crusading state that has collaborated with European imperialism against Islam from the days of Menelik. Ayman al-Zawahiri, Bin Laden's deputy, declared a Jihad against Ethiopia and called for volunteers from all over the Islamic world to join forces in Somalia. Another al-

¹² www.alquma.net/vb/showthread.php?t=197024

¹³ <http://vb.vip600.com/archive/index.php/t-112646.html>

¹⁴ www.alarabiya.net/Articles/2006/12/25/30216.htm

¹⁵ www.yahosein.com/vb/showthread.php?p=689106

Qaida leader, writing under the name of “The Lion of the Sons of Islam,” added, on the same website: “Oh Muslims, the road to Somalia to face little Abraha is open for you.... Know that Meles Zenawi is a descendant of Abraha, for he comes from Tigre, from the same tribe.” Al-Qaida’s campaign to fly the volunteers to Somalia was accordingly called “The road of the birds in flocks (*abablis*),” the birds which killed Abraha’s elephant.¹⁶

Demonization – Penetrating the Mainstream?

The voice of the radicals is far from dominant. Most governments and political establishments in the Middle East are primarily worried about Islamic militancy. They are not at all sorry about the fall of the Islamic Courts’ regime in Somalia. Most leaders of Sunni communities view Iran and her Shiite allies as the ultimate danger, and would not be tempted to divert their attention to Ethiopia. For many Arab and Islamic pragmatists, Ethiopia is more a partner than an enemy. Her significant contribution to the fight against radicalism may well solidify the already momentous process of Ethiopia’s re-joining the Middle East.

Public opinion in the Islamic world is apparently split on Ethiopia. The discussion, (by no means central in today’s Middle East) runs between the two polarized ancient concepts, that of the descendants of the righteous *Najashi*, the savior of Islam, and that of descendants of Abraha, its would-be destroyer. However, the precedent of Ethiopia’s virtually invading and destroying an Islamic government, the magnitude of the event silhouetted against embedded traditions, seems bound to have a lasting impact. It is not difficult to discern a modicum of offense and anger among many shapers of public opinion, including those who cannot be said to be Islamic radicals.

Moderate Muslims used to follow the spirit of the more famous *hadith*, “Leave the Ethiopians alone as long as they leave you alone.” This *hadith* was indeed the key formula for the majority of scholars and statesmen throughout history. Namely, be tolerant toward Ethiopia in spite of her Christianity, provided she is not aggressive toward Muslims. From Ahmad Gragn, to the Sudanese Khalifa, through Mussolini’s admirer Shakib Arslan, the waging of war against Ethiopia had to be legitimized by accusing her of anti-Islamic policy, actual or alleged. Today’s invasion of Somalia, whatever its reason, depicts Ethiopia in the eyes of many as an active enemy of Islam. For example, the established journalist Muwaffaq Muhadin, a columnist for one of Jordan’s leading newspapers, a writer considered a liberal with some Marxist tendencies, wrote the following on what is by no means an Islamist website: “From Abraha to Zenawi. Who does not remember the year of the elephant, Abraha, the Ethiopian storming of Mecca and his failure... The same story repeats itself as the new Abraha, namely Zenawi, invaded Somalia armed with hundreds of iron elephants and supported by a traitorous collaborating local government. Abraha the first was an agent of the Romans and the present Abraha is an agent of the Americans, who are the modern Romans. In both cases, the two Abrahams fight against Arabs and their religious culture. The first time, against the Ka’aba; now against the Union of the Islamic Courts... I am a person of socialist and secular convictions. I believe in the saying “religion is to God and the motherland is for all.” But I see this [Ethiopian] aggression against the [Islamic] nation as part of the Christian-Jewish war waged directly in Iraq and Afghanistan and indirectly through agents in Lebanon and Somalia. I never

¹⁶ www.tajdeed.org.uk/forums/showthread.php?s=7e396d0e95885aa1d39565ddb...

identified with the Taliban when they destroyed the statues of Buddha, nor with the Union of Islamic courts in Somalia when they confiscated musical instruments... I knew they would not last. But the American invasion of Iraq and that of their agents of Somalia are not for music and liberty. They will end like the war elephants of Abraha who came only to sow fear and destruction.”¹⁷

The whole issue of the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia is still fresh and far from finished. This is not the time to even begin to appreciate its strategic significance. One aspect, however, is already quite visible. It touched a very sensitive cord in Islamic publics. In the spheres of concepts and images, what used to be a rather marginal symbol of extreme demonization, now penetrates to the very center. This is a process liable to acquire a momentum of its own. It is not improbable that the whole episode will be canonized through the imagined, analogical symbolism of a Ka'aba in Mogadishu demolished by an Abraha Zenawi. Nor it is improbable that, for many, that episode will acquire a different meaning –that of Ethiopia, by combating the fanatics, again helping Islam. For the present, all we can say is that these dilemmas are being sharpened. They challenge Muslims around the globe, and most particularly – the Muslims of Ethiopia.

¹⁷ www.alkader.net/jan/mahdeen_070107.htm

Religious Change and Islam: The Emergence of the Salafi Movement in Bale, Ethiopia

Terje Østebø¹

This paper intends to shed light on the early emergence and growth of the Salafi movement in Bale. Focusing on Islamic scholars returning from studies in Saudi in the late 1960s, the paper discusses the role of these individuals, as well as the nature and content of the new impulses they brought. Further, the discourse over cultural and religious practices caused by these new impulses will be duly discussed, particularly with reference to the role of Islamic literacy in the context of Bale.

Introduction

Islam in Ethiopia has often been contrasted to Islam of the Middle East and portrayed as pragmatic, tolerant and inclusive. Esoteric, Sufi-oriented and syncretistic, it is largely singled out as a homogeneous and inert phenomenon, devoid of any major changes up until the late 20th century. Arguably, such a picture conceals the inherent diversity and dynamics of Ethiopian Islam. Disparate patterns of Islamisation, occurring at different points of history, and influenced from various directions contributed to shaping of a variety of Muslim communities with distinct localised features. Home to a number of Sufi brotherhoods and with the presence of three of the four *madhabs*, Islam in Ethiopia is best characterised as a heterogeneous and dynamic phenomenon. This dynamic nature is further demonstrated by a recurrent trend of religious change occurring at various stages in history, in which Ahmed Gragn may represent the most known reformer. As amply discussed by Hussein Ahmed in his survey of 19th century Islam in Wollo, change was an essential aspect of indigenous Islam in this period, where winds of change in the wider world of Islam also found pathways to Ethiopia, leading to controversy and tensions between reformers and defenders of the status quo (Hussein Ahmed 2001). This illustrates the existence of interactions between trans-local and localised Islam and between groups within the Ethiopian Muslim community contributing to constant negotiations and the mouldings of inherent and new messages.

Also in his survey, Hussein stated that “it is interesting to note that Ethiopian Islam did not respond to the Wahhabi call” (2001: 73). The intention of this paper is not to prove Hussein wrong. Undoubtedly, Hussein’s descriptions of 19th century Wollo are accurate. However, moving more than a century ahead, we see a complete different situation, with Salafism making a clear impact on contemporary Islam in Ethiopia.²

Based on findings from an extensive fieldwork, this paper intends to shed some light on the initial emergence and growth of the Salafi movement in Bale. This province was

¹ PhD-Candidate, Dept. of Comparative Religion, Stockholm University & Research-affiliate at Christian Michelsen’s Institute, Bergen. Email: terje.ostebo@cmi.no

² The term commonly used in Ethiopia is *Wahhabism*. Because of the term’s pejorative connotation and as Salafism is increasingly being used in the scholarly discourse, I have chosen this term. Other terms that are used are *ahl al-Sunna wa Jama’a* and *ahl al-Tawhid*.

one of the areas where the movement at an early stage gained foothold, and is today one of the strongholds of Salafism in Ethiopia. My objective is to contribute with insights on the movement in its particularity; hopefully contributing to a broader understanding of Salafism in general. Linking the empirical material with various theoretical perspectives on religious change, I moreover seek to forward some reflections around this phenomenon. The discussion is situated around three interrelated themes; first, the interaction of various contexts and the transcendence of boundaries; secondly, the issue of Islamic literacy as affecting change; and thirdly, the aspect of socio-economical relations.

Religious Change

This perspective of this contribution draws largely from the discourse on religious change in an African context. Initiated through an essay by Robin Horton in 1971, a rather intense debate has occupied a large numbers of Africanists, and still does.³ Numerous publications have discussed the concepts of conversion and religious change, various determinant factors and prospective outcomes of change.⁴ While each of these contributions would contain important misjudgements as well as having restricted valuable as isolated approaches, I concur with Droogers' argument for an eclectic model. Rather than discharging them, he argues for a combination of former perspectives, construing them as complementary to each other (Droogers 1985). In this paper, religious change is seen as change occurring within a same religious system; it does not involve the exchange of religious affiliation from one religion to another. It basically understands religious change as a reciprocal process of stimulus and response; between advocates of a particular idea and targeted audiences. Whereas many of the former contributions came to pay much attention to structural developments within the recipient communities, and relatively little attention to the agents of change (Clarke 1987: 136), I believe we have to recognise the role of the agents and their discursive relationships to the audience for the understanding of religious change. Furthermore, as these are situated in their respective contexts as well as being active in the transcending of boundaries, we simultaneously need to consider these contexts and the interactions between them. This would imply a bottom-up perspective, in which contexts and interactions between actors within and across boundaries of these contexts would play a decisive role in the conceptualisation of religious change.

Whereas most of the earlier contributions largely focused on conversion to Christianity (and Islam) in the late 19th and early 20th century, this paper is situated in more recent history and in the particular case of Ethiopia. Clearly, this will influence the discussion.⁵ Seeking to understand Salafism and religious change in Bale, we ought to be reminded of the dynamic dimension inherent to all religions. Determined in its

³ Horton, Robin. 1971. "African Conversion." *Africa* 41, (2).

⁴ It would obvious be beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a thorough discussion on all of these contributions. For an overview see Rydving, Håkan. 1993. *The End of Drum-Time: Religious Change among the Lule Saami, 1670s-1740s*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. For a discussion of the initial contributions, see Ikenga-Metuh, Emefie. 1987. "The Shattered Microcosm: A Critical Survey of Explanations of Conversion in Africa." In Kristin Holst Petersen, ed. *Religion, Development and African Identity*, Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.

⁵ Most studies of religious change in Ethiopia have been related to Protestant Christianity. The only discussion of theoretical positions in relation to Islam is found in Hussein Ahmed. 2001. *Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia*. Leiden: Brill. For a more general overview, see Kaplan, Steven. 2004. "Themes and Methods in the Study of Conversion in Ethiopia: A Review Essay." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, (3).

pursuit to bring reforms, Salafism remains a separate set of ideas with its own particular origin and history. As one of several movements in Islam, its emergence and development was produced by and connected to given historical circumstances in various layers of contexts. In the case of Ethiopia, the movement's program for bringing a clean break with the past has been seen as something qualitatively different from other movements. On the other hand, and as I would argue, it could also be seen as yet another representation of the mentioned intrinsic dimension of dynamics within religion. Thus, Salafism needs to be situated in the historical and cultural particularities in which it appears, and rather than an approach determined by ideological or political overtones, only a thorough investigation of the movement's actual appearance would contribute to the understanding of its particularity and commonality. From this perspective, Salafism is as common and as complex as any movement of religious reform.

Islam in Bale and Religious Change

The first attempt to bring reform in Bale is ascribed to a certain Sheikh Muhammed Qatiba of Gololcha district. Returning home in the early 1940s, after 23 years of religious studies in Harar, Wollo and in al-Azhar University, Sheikh Muhammed embarked on a campaign to reform many of the Sufi practices of his contemporaries. It was mainly the use of drums accompanying the singing of Sufi litanies that was targeted, where he argued that this stimulated the unlawful dancing of males and females together. Similar ideas had already been raised by certain sheikhs in Arsi, and the use of drums was also forbidden at the shrine of Abbu Koye in Bale.

In contrast to Wollo, where Islam had been firmly established centuries ago, and where the reformers were struggling to "bring about a reconciliation between mysticism and the rigidity and barrenness of dogmatic Islam" (Hussein Ahmed 2001: 98), the reforms in Bale were initiated among a population who relatively recently had adapted Islam, and who to a large degree was living "with one foot on either side of the fence" (Fisher 1973: 33). The Islamisation of the Bale Oromo was a relatively recent phenomenon, and must be seen in relation to the general Sufi revival in the late 18th century, which had a clear impact on Ethiopia.⁶ Whereas other Muslim communities in Ethiopia were more directly affected, the impact on Bale was of an indirect nature. Sufism reached Bale from its neighbouring areas, where it already had been interpreted and moulded within these localities. Representations such as the Sufi main *turuq* never played any major role in Bale and neither was there a development of any trans-local identity of affiliation to the different brotherhoods. Rather, Sufism revolved around particular shrines, like that of *Sheikh Hussein*, and with Sufism developing into a popularised and localised form.⁷ Through this process of Islamisation, Muslims and adherents of the Oromo religion came to live side by side, in turn resulting in a gradual accommodation to the new faith. An intrinsic part of the Islamisation process was thus the infusion of pre-Islamic Oromo elements into Islam; either in the form of Oromo

⁶ For more details on the Islamisation of the Oromo, see Braukämper, U. 2002. *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia, Collected Essays*. Hamburg: Lit Verlag, chapter 5; Østebø, Terje. 2005. *A History of Islam and Inter-Religious Relations in Bale, Ethiopia*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

⁷ The shrine of *Sheikh Hussein* resurfaced in the late 18th century as a result of the activities of a certain Sheikh Muhammed Tilma Tilmo. Braukämper claims him to be a Somali missionary sent by Emir Abd al-Shakur of Harar (1783-93), whereas all oral traditions emphasis his (Bale) Oromo origin. See Braukämper. *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia, Collected Essays*.

religious practices becoming Islamised, or as survivals in a more “purer” form. This inevitably encumbered the development of Islamic scholarship in Bale, conformity to the main *sunni* doctrines and the performance of the obligatory Islamic practices. With an absence of mosques, my informants repeatedly claimed that *salat* was performed only during funerals and at the celebration of *id al-Fitr*. Obviously, knowledge was a commodity unevenly distributed, in the sense that the certain groups were more acquainted with the prescripts of Islam, and consequently more critical to the popularised and localised version of Bale Islam. Contrary to Trimingham who asserted that “the cleric is at one and the same time teacher-guide and medicine-man” (Trimingham 1959: 31), the religious leadership in Bale was, as we will see far more differentiated, representing incongruous religious traditions.

Sheikh Muhammed Qatiba is today regarded as an icon for the Salafi movement, yet it would be incorrect to label him a Salafi. Sheikh Muhammed never sought to abolish Sufism as such. He never opposed the *ziarah* to the shrines, nor did he question the ability of the *awliah* (sing. *walih*) to intercede with God. Rather, as well as other previous reformers from Wollo and other Muslim communities of Ethiopia, he should be viewed as a representation of a diverse Muslim society, whereby conceptions of Islamic dogmas and subsequent evaluative perceptions of existing praxis prevailed alongside each other, and sometimes in mutual competition. Furthermore, it illustrates the dynamic nature of Ethiopian Islam, where a relatively isolated area such as Bale was influenced by movements in the wider Islamic world; influences moulded into the local context through dialectic negotiations among different groups within this locality.

Transcending Boundaries

The incorporation of indigenous communities into a larger macrocosm has repeatedly been forwarded as the pervasive factor for conversion to so-called world religions; i.e. Islam and Christianity. The notion of the shattered microcosm, as introduced by Trimingham (1955; 1959) and elaborated by Horton (1971) emphasises the sudden impact of Western colonial powers leading to the collapse of traditional political, economical and social structures, in turn causing the disruption of “ethnic and local religions” (Trimingham 1955: 12-13). This crisis allegedly created a conducive situation for the expansion of Islam and Christianity. Albeit forwarding important insights, this perspective tends to downplay the fact that the changes stemmed from ideas originating in a different context, and that the process of change involved the transcendence of boundaries by certain agents. It would thus be crucial to ask who these agents were, where were they from and what factors were involved in the process of cross-territorial and cross-cultural interaction?

The introduction of Salafism to Bale involved the transcendence of spacial, cultural, ideological and linguistic boundaries. As an ideology, it originated in the province of Najd, present-day Saudi Arabia. It is ascribed to the teaching of Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahab (1703-1792), who by forming an alliance with a tribal leader, Muhammed ibn Saud, managed to utilise his ideas as the ideological force for the unification of the local tribes and the establishment of the Saudi monarchy. Since then, Salafism has been the guiding ideology of Saudi Arabia, the very heart of Salafi Islam. Salafism remained largely confined behind the borders of the monarchy, and up until the 20th century, it did not have much impact on Muslims in the wider Islamic world. This was firstly due to their stance of religious exclusiveness resulting in a policy of isolation, where contacts with other non-Salafi Muslims were viewed as a threat to their religious purity.

Secondly, the Saudis' politico-religious grip on the Hijaz remained weak until the 1930s, clearly reducing the impact Salafism could have had upon foreign pilgrims (Commins 2006: 30, 40, 72f).

The Italian Factor and the *Hajj*

In spite of its proximity to the Islamic mainland, Ethiopia's Muslims remained relatively isolated from the rest of the Muslim world. *Hajj* was mostly performed by those on the coastal areas and in Harar, while rarer in communities in the hinterland. As a result of the opening of a trade route to the port of Tajura in the end of the 19th century, pilgrimage from Wollo increased (Hussein Ahmed 2001: 76), yet the general figure remained low.⁸

The Italian occupation (1935-1942) initiating the classical colonial "divide and rule" policy, came to favour Ethiopia's Muslim population over the Christian political elite. Moreover, seeking support for their colonial project from the Saudis, they made an effort to portray themselves as protectors of the Ethiopian Muslims' religious rights (Erich 2007: 39f). One way of doing this was by encouraging and subsidising the pilgrimage to the holy cities. In 1936 the number of Ethiopian pilgrims reached somewhere between 1 600 and 1 900, whereas after the restoration of the monarchy, the number plunged to only 57 (Erich 2007: 73-73). Coinciding with King Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud's policy of adding Hijaz to his realm and the subsequent establishment of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, foreign pilgrims now became increasingly exposed to the Salafi doctrines.⁹ With the increase in Ethiopian pilgrims, Salafism gained an initial foothold in the town of Harar. Although Harar was important as a bridgehead for the introduction of Salafi Islam in this area, centres for Salafi teaching were also established among the Oromo of Hararge. Some has argued that the introduction of *qat* as a cash-crop in Hararge led to an increase of the *hajj* among the Oromo, in turn returning to disseminate the new teaching among their kinsmen.¹⁰ According to my findings, the number of pilgrims departing from Bale during the Italian period was relatively low. Instead, a larger number was sent for training to Harar, where they through contacts with Oromo Salafis got acquainted with the new teaching.

The expansion of infrastructure initiated during the Italian occupation, and its continuation in the succeeding decades obviously contributed to increase travelling. Already in 1929 the railway to Djibouti was completed, and with the construction of new roads and improved bus-services during the 1950s and 1960s, travelling become more easy, consequently leading to a growth in the number of pilgrims crossing the Red Sea. As many of the pilgrims came under Salafi influence, this inevitably contributed to further dissemination of its ideas among the peoples in the south eastern parts of the country.¹¹

⁸ Reports show that in 1933, only 11 out of 19 500 pilgrims came from Ethiopia. See Erlich, Haggai. 2007. *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity, and Politics Entwined*. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publisher.

⁹ It is important to note that the Saudi king showed a certain degree of sensitivity to other religious sentiments in the Hijaz. See Commins, David. 2006. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. London: Tauris.

¹⁰ Ahmed Zekeria, personal communication; Addis Ababa 25.9.2006.

¹¹ Important for the introduction of Salafism to Arsi were Sheikh Aman Ahmad Abd'allah (Aman Lode), Sheikh Ahmad Abd'allah (Ahmad Nunu) and Sheikh Hassan Gammada. See Temam Haji. 2002. "Islam in Arsi, Southeast Ethiopia (Ca. 1840-1974)." MA Thesis in History, AAU.

The *Jama'a* in Nur Mosque

Improved communication also brought various localities within Ethiopia closer to each other. In Bale, construction of roads, of airports and improved means of communication during the 1950s and 1960s contributed in moulding the borders of locality, bringing the province more in contact with the trans-local context. This development was accompanied with a process of urbanisation and the increased significance of trading. Both Horton (1975) and Trimingham (1959) have emphasised the role of commercial communities in bringing religious change. Using the dubious concept of the “urban mind”, Trimingham has argued that the urban merchant is more “individualistic and wide-visioned” than his rural co-religionist (1959: 25). Similarly, Horton talks about the merchants who “had broken away to a great extent from [their] microcosms”, thus more receptive to new ideas (1975: 376-377). Although both writers deal with initial conversion to Islam in a period much earlier than our case, their arguments are nevertheless of relevance for Bale. In the late 1940s a class of Muslim Oromo merchants emerged in Robe. Frequently travelling to the neighbouring provinces and to Addis Ababa, they soon became acquainted with alternative trends at that time. Dislocated from the social structures of their rural home-areas, this furthermore led them to question many of the religious practices among their contemporaries. In 1963/4 the group of merchants was joined by a certain Sheikh Muhammed-Amin Chaffa, a native of Arsi settling in Robe. Through his religious education in Harar he had come in contact with Salafi teaching, yet he was not strongly advocating such views in public. Shortly after his arrival in Robe he formed a *jama'a* in Nur mosque (built in 1959), where he gathered the group of merchants for the study of the Qu'ran.¹² The size of the group varied from ten to twenty persons. The establishment of the *jama'a* corresponded with the appointment of Hajji Muhammed Hajji Mustafa as *qadi* of Bale, who was a graduate from al-Azhar University. Regularly attending the *jama'a* and preaching at *jumma* in Nur mosque, he became an important resource for the *jama'a* in Robe. As he openly opposed the popularised Islam in Bale, he came to be an important factor for the formulation of the *jama'a*'s ideology. It must be assumed that the group did not initially have a clear Salafi identity. They knew about a new movement in Hararge and in Arsi, yet they had little knowledge about the deeper tenets of the Salafi teaching. Emphasising the strict adherence to the principle of God's singularity (*tawhid*), they fiercely rejected pilgrimage to the shrines, as well as other practices seen as irreconcilable with this idea. Refraining from participating in the pilgrimages, they would on occasions be labelled as “Wahhabis”, yet due to their economic status and their piety they were nevertheless highly respected among the people. The *jama'a* remained a rather closed circle, devoted to the study of the Islamic sources and came to represent an alternative religious orientation in Bale.

The “Journey of the 80” and Sheikh Abubakr Muhammed

The number of pilgrims from Bale to the Hijaz remained relatively low in the first decades after the occupation. Those who sought religious education usually travelled to Hararge and Arsi, with some few to Jimma. Then in 1962, a particular incident would prove to be decisive for the contacts between Saudi and Bale. The so-called “journey of

¹² *Jama'a* which usually refers to a “society” or a “gathering of people”, constituted in Bale a study-circle, a religious school or a society.

the 80” became formative in establishing new relations between the two localities; both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

In Saudi Arabia, King Faisal was on his hand initiating a policy for promoting the kingdom as a player in Middle Eastern politics and to balance the influence of Nasser’s pan-Arabism. Establishing contacts all over the Muslim world, as well as with the non-Muslim world (the latter was due to the discovery of petroleum), the king’s vision was to forward Islam as the unifying power in the region.¹³ This policy also forced the Salafi establishment in Saudi to adjust their exclusivist position in relation to the outside world, and came to accompany the monarch by seeking to export the Salafi doctrines to a wider audience. This involved among others the establishment of Muslim World League (MWL) in 1962 and important for our case, the formation of several centres for Islamic learning, which soon became pivotal in exporting the Salafi message. The most prominent of these was the Islamic University in Medina established in 1961, offering religious education to an increasing number of foreign students.

Those participating in “the journey of the 80” were among the first to enter the Islamic University in Medina. Studies and living-costs were abundantly funded by the Saudis, enabling many to pursue their studies for years. News of this possibility soon reached Bale, and during the 1960s and 1970s an increasing number of Bale Muslims crossed the Red Sea in search for knowledge. Needless to say perhaps; these people would in turn become important in bringing back Salafism to Bale. One of those departing on the “journey of the 80” was a certain Sheikh Abubakr Muhammed. A native of Shaya, a village few kilometres west of Robe, he received his initial education in Bale, before leaving for Saudi. Sheikh Abubakr never entered any Islamic university, but remained under the guardianship of a certain Sheikh Abdallah in the town of Abaha outside Mecca. Instead of attending formal studies, he became well versed in the techniques of *da’wa*, something he to the fullest would pursue upon his return to Bale. This return came in 1969, yet it was not until 1971 that he embarked on his campaign of reforming Islam. Focusing on the necessity to worship the single God alone, and making fierce attacks on the existing religious practices of his surroundings, he was to become the main tool for religious change and remembered as the icon of the early Salafi movement in Bale – labelled *Sheikh Mufti* by his followers. Inevitably, his campaign did, as we will return to, soon spark fierce controversies within the Muslim community.

In the sense that it was introduced by indigenous agents and not by expatriate missionaries, Salafism in Bale was a home-grown phenomenon. It was the Muslim Oromo that crossed the borders and brought the new ideas into the locality, and it is interesting to note that even on the trans-local level, the Salafi doctrines were very much moulded within the ethnic group of the Oromo; among those of Hararge, Arsi and Bale. Situated within a relatively similar cultural universe, these agents were arguably in a better position to negotiate the Salafi message in a way enhancing the reception in their respective localities.

¹³ For more details on the Saudi foreign policy in this period, see Sindi, Abdullah M. 1980. "King Faisal and Pan-Islamism." In Willard A. Beling, ed. *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia*, London: Croom Helm.

Literacy and Religious Change

The transcending of boundaries bringing localities together and paving the way for the introduction of new ideas into Bale was also imbedded in a discourse on sources authorising religious practice, where a new focus on literacy is notable. The relationship between literacy and religious change has been emphasised by Fisher who argued that literacy have had the effect of “conserving the *status quo* in belief and behaviour, and [...] introducing radical changes” (1973: 35). From the Weberian tradition, frozen religious traditions in a scriptural form has ostensibly been associated with so-called world religions (i.e. Christianity, Islam, etc). In contrast to so-called traditional religions, the world religions are thus perceived as more rational, coherent and systematic, where Weber consequently saw religious change in the sense of moving from a traditional religion to either Christianity or Islam as a process of rationalisation. In light of an increased focus on literacy in the process of change in Bale, it would be relevant to ask whether this perspective has anything to contribute for the understanding of religious change in this case.

Literacy and Resistance to Change

First of all, I would argue that a less developed literal tradition in Bale thwarted the resistance to change. As already noted, the acceptance of Islam in Bale did not create a clear-cut break with past religious practices; rather their infusion within the framework of Islam. The recent Islamisation of the Oromo in Bale also had an impact on the development of Islamic scholarship. In Harar and Wollo where Islamic scholarship was well-established within the Muslim community, many of the shrines in Wollo were centres of teaching that “fostered a tradition of literacy and conformity to Sunni Islam” (Hussein Ahmed 2001: 94). In Bale this was less obvious. Although Islamic scholarship was disseminated at *Dirre Sheikh Hussein*, the pilgrimage itself and performance of rituals with a clear pre-Islamic colour was more important.¹⁴ With the exception of a certain Sheikh Abd al-Wahab Yunus in Agarfa, none of my informants were able to mention any indigenous *alim* in 19th century Bale. Rather, the *ulama* at that time consisted of refugees from Wollo, like Sheikh Ahmed Wollo and Hajji Muhammed Siraj, the first *qadi* of Bale. It was not until the first part of the 20th century that a class of indigenous *ulama* emerged, partly facilitated by the policy of the Italians. Travels in search for religious knowledge increased, taking people across the borders of Bale. Centres for learning also appeared, yet only a few could offer teaching in *ilm* on a higher level. Books were a scarce commodity, shared among the *ulama* and copied by hand. In contrast to Wollo, Harar and even to Arsi where the *ulama* composed indigenous religious texts, this was totally absent in Bale. In addition to the *ulama*, the religious stratum in Bale consisted of a larger group of Qu'ranic teachers with only a rudimentary knowledge in Arabic. Then there were the guardians of the shrines (*darga*) and the so-called *fuqrahs*, individuals with no religious training who by claiming to possess *karama* performed miracles of various kinds.

Yet the non-literal Oromo rendered great respect for the scriptures of Islam. Although inaccessible in its Arabic form, the book was seen as divine and as directly

¹⁴ The pilgrimage known as *muda* has been described by Braukämper as a continuation of the veneration to the *abba muda* of Dello, an Oromo religious institution. See Braukämper. *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia, Collected Essays*. This is also elaborated by Umer Nure. 2006. "The Pilgrimage to Dirre Sheikh Hussein: Its Social Organization and Overall Roles." MA Thesis in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University.

inhabiting a distinct power. One of my informants told me that his village's imam used to sit daily at a particular spot regularly reading from the Qu'ran. He was the only one in the village who mastered the language, and the only one who prayed regularly. Yet the villagers viewed the imam's reading and prayer as protective and as sufficient for the whole village's salvation. The word in its physical form was perceived as powerful, having the ability to protect and to cure. Passages from the Qu'ran were widely used as talismans; hung around the neck, used as slate-water and kept as protections for various threats. For many of the religious teachers, a considerable part of their income was collected from production of talismans and from so-called "magic writing", where books on astrology were commonly used to diagnose illness and to foretell the future.

In other words, the recent Islamisation of the Oromo had impinged on the development of Islamic scholarship in Bale. Knowledge was limited to a small class of religious specialists, with restricted acquaintance to the religious scriptures, and moreover, the literal tradition of Islam was by the populace perceived as representations of a largely "magical" world. In turn, this becomes pivotal for understanding the process of change brought by the Salafis.

Those travelling to Saudi came from the non-literal Oromo society of Bale. None of them originated from a line of *ulama* families. Most of them had received their basic Islamic education in Bale or in the surrounding areas, usually in *fiqh* according to the *Shafiyya madhab*, and beside this their acquaintance with the variety of Islamic scholarship was limited. Coming into contact with Salafi ideas, either in Hararge or through institutions of learning in Saudi, this lack of knowledge made them unprepared to critically question the new message. Highly respectful of the teachers in Hararge, and even more so in Saudi – well equipped with books and arguments based on the Qu'ran and the *hadith*, these students from Bale soon found themselves captured by the Salafi message. As expressed by one of my informants; "when these people from Bale were presented with a book by ibn Taymiyya – where the cover read *al-sheikh al-Islam*, they immediately embraced him". In contrast, areas like Wollo and Harar, vested in a long history of Islam which had produced a strong class of *ulama* and a tradition of indigenous Islamic literacy, were far more prepared to resist the Salafi dogmas. Having sufficient of centres of learning, the people from these areas was less prone to pursue religious studies abroad. And if they did, their fluency in the Islamic literacy made them aware of existing doctrinal differences, and enabled them to avoid and resist the Salafi teaching. Lacking such resources, this obviously paved the way for religious change in Bale. Returning from Saudi, graduates with formal certificates in Islamic studies, with stacks of books and fluent in Arabic and in the religious disciplines had clear advantages encountering the non-literal population of Bale. As expressed by one of my informants; "they brought evidence from the Qu'ran and other books, and they were asking us to bring our evidence from books. Because we had no books, no evidence - our belief fell".

Literacy as Enhancing Change

As already indicated, the famous sermon held by Sheikh Abubakr in 1971 sparked an intense controversy. Soon after, the Muslims in Robe and surrounding found themselves separated into two groups; a small group supporting Sheikh Abubakr and a much larger group fiercely opposing him. The latter group was led by a certain Hajji Adam Sado of Goba. He was a man of great reputation in Bale; as an ardent opponent to Amhara rule, propagator of the Oromo nationalist movement and a supporter of the Bale rebellion in

the 1960s. As tensions aggravated, with the two groups forwarding harsh threats and accusations against each other, the provincial government saw no other option than to intervene. Later the same year, they called for a large meeting in Goba where the two parties should be given the chance to present their cases, and where also the *ulama* of Bale were invited to give their opinion. As expected, the meeting did not reach on a binding conclusion. Rather, a compromise was issued, stating the right for each group to follow their conviction and to propagate their respective views.

Reviewing the arguments forwarded in the conflict, one interesting point is noticeable. The Salafis were exclusively referring to the written corpus of Islam; to the Qu'ran and the *hadith*. Emphasising the doctrine of *tawhid*, they sternly argued that the pilgrimage to *Dirre Sheikh Hussein* and the celebration of *mawlid* was against the divine message of Islam and equal to *shirk*. From their opponent's side, there was hardly any mentioning of any written source. Instead, the pilgrimage and the celebration of *mawlid* were said to be an intrinsic part of the Oromo culture; something which had been practiced for generations. What the Salafis were bringing was a foreign teaching, alien to the Oromo culture and not suitable for the people in Bale. In other words, the two sets of arguments made were drawn from two different traditions; one referring to a divine law frozen in written form, the other to oral traditions and established customs.

Arguably, by referring to the written corpus of Islam – and applying it to the very context of religious life in Bale, the Salafis were not only bringing in new religious ideas, but they were also altering the existing perception and usage of scripture. Although the opponents called themselves Muslims, rendered the pilgrimage and the celebration of *mawlid* as Islamic practices, they were making references to the practice of the forefathers and established customs. This reveals a world shaped by traditions and customs – all framed within the particular locality of Bale; an Islamic locality. The sources sanctioning the legitimacy of this world were drawn from this locality. And this was exactly what the Salafis came to challenge. Referring to the book as a divine revelation, they argued that the word was to be read and understood. It did not have curative power in the form of talismans; rather it contained a readable message applicable for the actual lives of man and a corrective for religious life. Rendering literacy as important in bringing religious change, Fisher has argued that in cases where scriptures “has fallen into disuse, and an appeal to literature revives it, the result may be revolutionary” (1973: 35). Although there are certain judgemental overtones in his statement, this perspective seems fitting for the case of Bale. Underscoring a prescribed and fixed system of doctrines, and imposing it as undisputed norms, the new perception of literacy can be seen as initiating a process of rationalisation. Whereas Weber saw rationality as separating traditional religion from world religions, we here see the process of rationalisation occurring within an Islamic framework, with the emphasis of scriptures and the discharging of non-literal traditions paving the way for altered conceptions of religious explanations and changing the religious practices. “They were making Islam scientific”, one of my informant said laconically when describing the Salafis. Although the reforms the Salafis advocated would be radical enough, the fact that they remained within an Islamic tradition, with references to scriptures as their only authority, this contributed in alleviating the process of change. The inherent respect for the Islamic scriptures already held by the people, made them receptive for the scripturalist arguments. Using literacy in the sense that it “condemned the present to renew the past” (Fisher 1973: 35), the Salafi reform enabled the people to retain their

basic Muslim identity, it accommodated religious perceptions and practices, which in turn could be seen as a continued process of Islamisation.

The integration of Bale into imperial Ethiopia paved the way for the crumbling of indigenous institutions, and where the process of an accelerating modernisation during the 1950s and 1960s furthered the gradual erosion of existing cultural boundaries. Although the process of modernisation in Ethiopia should not be overestimated at this stage, its impact could best be understood as unevenly distributed, mostly affecting the emerging class of merchants in Robe. Constituting a new feature in the Oromo social structure, and frequently crossing both the spatial and cultural borders of Bale, they became more ready to question the existing religious conceptions and practices of their surroundings. Neither should Salafism be too closely linked with the process of modernisation at this particular point in history. The scale of the modern project was limited, and those introducing Salafism were not particularly exposed to this movement. On the other hand, the appearance of Salafism coinciding with the emerging process of modernisation would prove pivotal for the further development. The Emperor's modernisation project took a decisive turn with the revolution in 1974, in which the rationalisation of society became framed within a political system of coercion and force. This development should prove crucial for the further expansion of Salafism. Yet this is a different story.

Transforming Socio-economic Relations

As any process of religious change, the changes occurring in Bale was marred with other spheres of human life; social, political, economical, etc. As this last part intends to argue, there was a clear relationship between religious change and socio-economic relations, in the sense that a new emerging economical structure both contributed to enhance and sustain religious change.

Similar to other Muslim communities in Ethiopia, the religious establishment in Bale depended entirely on the contributions from the population. The guardians of the shrines secured their income from the offerings of the pilgrims, the *fuqras* from the production of talismans and managing various rituals. The income of the *ulama* was drawn from voluntary contributions from the students and on income from their *waqf* land. As already indicated, many of the *ulama* of Bale remained critical to the popularised Sufi practices. Although firmly vested in the established Sufi traditions, participating in the pilgrimages, subscribing to the idea of *ziara* and interceding power of the *awliyah*, they remained detached from the more excessive rituals. They would never, as many informants repeated, "load their donkeys with goods", meaning they would not bring sacrifices (*sileta*, Arabic: *Nadhr*) to the shrines. Neither would they participate in the ecstatic dances. Rather, the time of pilgrimage was an occasion to convene with other *ulama*, to exchange books and to engage in teaching.

The socio-economic aspect of religious change in Bale becomes obvious when seeing the nature of resistance to change. The most ardent opponents to the Salafis were the guardians of the shrines and the *fuqras* who clearly saw the proposed reforms as a direct threat to their income. Similarly, the resistance from the *ulama* can be seen from the same perspective. Although critical to certain aspects of the rituals, the celebration of *mawlid* and the time of pilgrimage were important occasions where they received extra gifts either in cash or kind. Marred with the restriction produced by the social structures, and seeking to protect their status, the *ulama* knew that open criticism of the prevailing practices would turn the people against them; in turn interrupting the material

foundation for their livelihood. Although some would switch side in the long run, the fear of losing income contributed in cementing their resistance to the new ideas.

In contrast, at the time Salafism was introduced to Bale, the existing socio-economical structure was changing, in the sense that new relationships were established. Already in the case of Sheikh Muhammed Qatiba, economical emancipation was crucial for enabling him to advocate change. Embarking on a voluntary *hijrah* to the lowland-areas, he took up farming to sustain himself, and thus avoided relying on support from his surrounding. Economically independent, he was thus in a better position to advocate change. Further, my informants claimed that the reason for Sheikh Muhammed-Amin Caffa to take up trading was to avoid being dependent on contributions from the people, in turn enabling him to voice criticism without this affecting his livelihood. More important, however, was the emergence of the class of merchants in Robe. Constituting a new economical stratum in the Oromo society, they would prove important in augmenting change. When Sheikh Abubakr and the other Salafis started to campaign for change, they were both ideologically and economically dislocated from the people. However, forming an alliance with the commercial community, they were provided with the necessary financial support. The merchants became important in assisting Sheikh Abubakr and those returning from studies in Saudi, in construction of mosques and in providing the necessary means for the establishment of the *Salafiyya Madrassa* in 1976. Their role in supporting Salafism financially thus became crucial in sustaining the movement in Bale. It should also be included that some of the returnees from Saudi received some assistance from overseas, yet this was seemingly limited and not on a regular basis.¹⁵ Although a relationship of dependency initially existed, the Salafis were gradually able to convert their teaching into a currency that could maintain the movement. Emphasising the linkage of “transcendental imperatives to institutions for the propagation and control of religious knowledge”, Hefner has argued that successful religious changes very much depend on the formation of institutional structures (1993: 19). In Bale it was the *Salafiyya Madrassa* that came to be this organisation. Providing employment for an increasing number of scholars returning from Saudi, it became the main arena for an emerging Salafi *ulama* regulating the Salafi doctrines and disseminating them to an increasingly wider audience. Although the *madrassa* to some degree was depending on contributions from the people, it soon developed a more formalised structure where income in the form of student-fees became important.

Conclusion

As any informed reader would have observed, we have only dealt with a short, yet formative period of the movement's history. Developments in different localities paved the way for transcending the boundaries of these localities, in turn bringing the teaching of Salafism to Bale. As expected, the new ideas sparked controversies, yet managing to attract an audience sufficient for sustaining the ideas. Important in this process of change was the discursive relationship between agents of change and recipients, operating within various localities, and the crossing of spacial and cultural boundaries. Moreover, intrinsic to the process of change was a renewed focus on Islamic literacy

¹⁵ This has been a highly issue among my informants, making it impossible to receive much detailed information. It seems that the Saudis were providing support through their embassy in Addis Ababa, and that some of the Salafis would travel to Addis to collect this. The actual size of the support remains undisclosed, yet it is clear that none were able to earn any wealth. It corresponds, however, with the efforts made by King Faisal at that time, actively seeking to promote Muslim communities in Africa through financial support. For more details, see Sindi. "King Faisal and Pan-Islamism."

affecting the perception of the world and new economical structures sustaining the initiated changes.

Salafism was introduced in Bale in the early 1970s. The movement survived the coercive policy of the *Derg*, and is today dominating the religious picture in Bale, as well as making a clear impact in other parts of the country. This fact alone would thus be a strong imperative for the study of Salafism in Ethiopia to be continued.

References

- Braukämper, Ulrich. 2002. *Islamic History and Culture in Southern Ethiopia, Collected Essays*. Hamburg: Lit Verlag.
- Clarke, Peter B. 1987. "Islam, Development and African Identity: The Case of West Africa." In Kristin Holst Petersen, ed. *Religion, Development and African Identity*, Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- Commins, David. 2006. *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*. London: Tauris.
- Droogers, André. 1985. "From Waste-Making to Recycling: A Plea for an Eclectic Use of Models in the Study of Religious Change." In Wim van Binsbergen & Matthew Schoffeleers, ed. *Theoretical Explorations in African Religion*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Erlich, Haggai. 2007. *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity, and Politics Entwined*. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publisher.
- Fisher, Humphrey. 1973. "Conversion Reconsidered: Some Historical Aspects of Religious Conversion in Black Africa." *Africa* 42, (1).
- Hefner, Robert W. 1993. "Introduction: World Building and the Rationality of Conversion." In Robert W. Hefner, ed. *Conversion to Christianity*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Horton, Robin. 1971. "African Conversion." *Africa* 41, (2).
- . 1975. "On the Rationality of Conversion, Part II." *Africa* 45, (4).
- Hussein Ahmed. 2001. *Islam in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ikenga-Metuh, Emefie. 1987. "The Shattered Microcosm: A Critical Survey of Explanations of Conversion in Africa." In Kristin Holst Petersen, ed. *Religion, Development and African Identity*, Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies.
- Kaplan, Steven. 2004. "Themes and Methods in the Study of Conversion in Ethiopia: A Review Essay." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, (3).
- Rydving, Håkan. 1993. *The End of Drum-Time: Religious Change among the Lule Saami, 1670s-1740s*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.
- Sindi, Abdullah M. 1980. "King Faisal and Pan-Islamism." In Willard A. Beling, ed. *King Faisal and the Modernisation of Saudi Arabia*, London: Croom Helm.
- Temam Haji. 2002. "Islam in Arsi, Southeast Ethiopia (Ca. 1840-1974)." MA Thesis in History, AAU.
- Trimingham, Spencer J. 1955. *The Christian Church and Islam in West Africa*. London: SCM Press.
- . 1959. *Islam in West Africa*. London: Oxford Clarendon Press.

- Umer Nure. 2006. "The Pilgrimage to Dirre Sheikh Hussein: Its Social Organization and Overall Roles." MA Thesis in Social Anthropology, Addis Ababa University.
- Østebø, Terje. 2005. *A History of Islam and Inter-Religious Relations in Bale, Ethiopia*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International.

From Local to National Prominence:
the Life and Achievements of *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tānī b.
Habīb b. Bašīr (1913/14-1989): Ethiopian Muslim Scholar,
Teacher and Spiritual Leader

Hussein Ahmed¹

Šayh Muhammad Tānī b. Habīb b. Bašīr (1913/14-1989) was a prominent Ethiopian Muslim scholar from Wällo. After completing his Islamic education under several masters, he served for many years as a teacher in Däse before moving to Addis Abāba where he became *imām* of the Anwar Mosque and was put in charge of the first official translation of the Qurʾān into Amharic. *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī was the founding chairman of the Ethiopian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs. He trained many scholars and delivered sermons and lectures to the Muslim community, and was the author of the first full-length Amharic biography of the Prophet.

...kāna ‘allāmatan darrākatan dakiyyan
al-ma‘iyyan bāri‘ān ḡāmi‘ān li‘aštāti
al-‘ulūm mutahaliyyan bi‘l-ahlāq
al-nabīla layyina al-‘arīka rahb al-sadr
hadīd al-fū‘ād hasan al-sawt fasīh al-lisān
wabi‘l-jumlat kāna kāmil al-awsāf...²

The study of renowned Ethiopian Muslim religious scholars is more than of biographical importance; it also contributes to an understanding of the spirit and concerns of the times in which they lived as reflected in their lives, efforts and achievements. Despite the early introduction of Islam into Ethiopia and the emergence and of classes of Muslim literati in many parts of the country, the tradition of the writing of biographical accounts is not well-established. Only a limited number of them have been the subject of hagiographical works (*manāqibs*) which were usually composed after their deaths either by members of their immediate families or their disciples. Two typical examples are those of *Šayhs* Muhammad Šāfi b. Muhammad (1743-1806/7)³ and Ġa‘far Bukko b. Siddīq (1793-1860), both from Wällo.⁴ Moreover, the compilation of biographical dictionaries, which has a long tradition in the wider

¹ Department of History and Heritage Management, Addis Ababa University; e-mail: husahm@hist.aau.edu.et

² *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tāḡaddīn b. Ahmad, *I‘lām al-aḡbiyā’ bihayāt ‘uzamā’ Ityūbiyā min al-‘ulamā’ wa‘l-awliyā’ wa‘l-salātīn al-Islām wa‘l-asfiyā’* (unpublished MS), p. 425: [...he [Muhammad Tānī] was the most learned, fastest to grasp (knowledge), of the most brilliant and reflective (mind), excelling and all-rounded in his mastery of different disciplines, adorned with noble character and of modest manners, open-hearted and of strong will-power, beautiful voice and fluent speech, in general, perfect in good qualities...]

³ *Nasīhat al-Murīdīn* (Advice for Novices), written by his son, *Faqīh* Muhammad Nūr (still unpublished).

⁴ See Hussein Ahmed, ‘Introducing an Arabic Hagiography from Wällo’ in Taddese Beyene (ed.), *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* (Frankfurt am Main/Huntingdon, 1988), Vol. I, pp. 185-197.

Muslim world, has been conspicuously absent in Ethiopia. The only ones that are known to the present writer are those recently compiled by *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tāḡaddīn Ahmad⁵ and *Šayh* Muhammad Wāle Ahmad.⁶

Scholarly attention to this aspect of indigenous Islamic history has been scanty. Only in recent years have some attempts been made to undertake and publish studies on the lives and deeds of Ethiopian Muslim saints and scholars. The present writer has produced three articles on *Šayh* Talha b. Ġa‘far,⁷ *al-Hāḡḡ* Bušrā Ay Muhammad⁸ and *Šayh* Ġawhar b. Haydar b. ‘Alī.⁹

The present study, although not strictly of the same genre as the traditional biographical works, which largely focused on the erudition, piety and saintly pedigree of indigenous Muslim personalities, is a preliminary discussion of the educational and family background and life of *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tānī, as well as of the services he rendered to the Ethiopian Muslim *umma* (community) at the local, regional and national levels, and his legacy. It is based on limited oral data gathered in the course of informal discussions with people who knew or had informed knowledge about his life and activities, and on some published and unpublished sources.¹⁰ Needless to say that the paper in its present form is far from complete and exhaustive in terms of coverage and analysis of many other equally – and even more – crucial aspects of his life, and drawing on the rich corpus of oral testimonies and archival sources (as well as records of his sermons and preaching) that would certainly shed light on, and give insight into, the personality and achievements of perhaps the most extraordinary, prominent and influential religious figure in twentieth-century Ethiopia.¹¹

⁵ See fn. 2 *supra*.

⁶ *Kitāb Iqāz humam al-aḡbiyā’ birašh qatrat min al-tarāḡim al-‘ulamā’ wa’l-awliyā’ fī ḡumhūriyat Ityūbiyā* (Addis Ababa: Mu’assasat al-Naḡāšī, *Ramadān* 1425 [1426]). Only the first volume covering the letters *alif* through *hā’* was published. The author was *imām* of al-Nūr Mosque for many years and died in Jeddah and was buried in Mecca in 2005.

⁷ Hussein Ahmed, ‘The Life and Career of *Shaykh* Talha b. Ja‘far (c.1853-1936),’ *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, XXII (1989), pp. 13-30.

⁸ *Idem*, ‘*Al-Hājj* Bušrā Ay Muhammad: Muslim Reformer, Scholar and Saint of Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia’ in Bertrand Hirsch and Manfred Kropp (eds.), *Saints, Biographies and History in Africa* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), pp. 175-190. (It is worth noting in this connection that there is no known *manāqib* about *al-Hāḡḡ* Bušrā.)

⁹ *Idem*, ‘*Shaykh* Jawhar b. Haydar b. ‘Alī: A Mystic and Scholar of Shonkē, southeast Wallo, Ethiopia,’ *Annales d’Ethiopie*, XX (2004), pp. 47-56.

¹⁰ Although members of *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī’s family, especially his three sons, were willing to be interviewed, their busy professional life and other commitments did not allow them to accede to my request for interviews with them in the weeks preceding the deadline for the submission of the final paper.

¹¹ As the career of *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī spans the first part of the reign of Emperor Haylā Sellase (1930-36), the Italian Fascist occupation (1936-41), the second and final part of his reign (1941-74), and most of the period of military rule (1974-89), an account of his life (that should also include a discussion comparing and contrasting the position of Islam in Ethiopia during the periods of pre-war imperial, Italian, the restored imperial, and imperial rule) deserves a full-length monograph or even a book. Such a work can serve as a case study of twentieth-century Islam and contribute to a better understanding of the major issues of concern to Ethiopian Muslims: religious identity, equality, freedom of worship and expression, citizenship, civil liberties, right to organize and to participate in national affairs, relations with the state, other religious communities and institutions, and with the Muslim world at large, and responses to processes of reform and transformation within the country and its neighbours. The present writer intends to undertake and complete such a research in the foreseeable future.

The Making of a Scholar: Family and Educational Background

According to the Amharic biographical account published four years after his death, Muhammad Tānī was born at Ančarro/Kārabitti¹² in Qallu *awraḡḡa*, south Wällo administrative zone in 1906 E.C. /1913-14 A.D.¹³ His father was *al-Hāḡḡ* Habīb, the son of Bašīr, a native of Wālqayət in Təgray, who migrated to Qallu¹⁴ “seeking knowledge” (*talab al-‘ilm*).¹⁵ Muhammad Tānī’s mother was *Wäyzäro* Fātuma Malik. When Muhammad Tānī was four years old, his father went to Təgray and then to Asmāra where he stayed for more than twenty years.¹⁶ Muhammad Tānī’s first Qur’ān teachers were *Šayhs* Muftī b. Ibrāhīm of Wārrā Babbo and Ahmad Mahallī of Alašša in Wārrā Himāno, who were then the students of *al-Hāḡḡ* Ahmad b. Bašīr of Qallu (d.9 June 1948).¹⁷ He studied the Qur’ān, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *tafsīr* (exegesis), *mantiq* (logic), *usūl* (fundamentals [of jurisprudence]), *hadīt* and *balāḡa* (rhetoric) under several ‘*ulamā*’. At the age of 23, after completing the study of *Alfiyya* (*Kitāb al-khulāsa al-alfiya*, a résumé of *al-kāfiyya* by Muhammad ibn Mālik [1203/3-1274], he went to Asmāra in search of his father and returned with him after a year. It was in the same year that he set out for the pilgrimage.¹⁸

After completing his religious education in 1937 (1944/45), he taught for many years at mosques and Islamic schools first in Dāse, Wällo and then in Massawa in Eritrea. The Arabic version of the account of his life partly confirms and partly contradicts some facts in the Amharic one as well as providing pieces of additional information in the latter: at the age of seven, he studied the Qur’ān under Muftī b. Ibrāhīm and Ahmad Lāšī for four years. He also studied other subjects, especially *fiqh* according to the Hanafī *madhab*, under *al-Hāḡḡ* Ahmad of Qallu, and *nahw* (Arabic grammar and syntax) and *sarf* (morphology) under *Šayh* Kāmmälāw b. Muhammad (d. A.H.13 *Dū’l-Hiḡḡa* 1367/6 *Teqemt* 1941 E.C./18 October 1948)¹⁹ In A.H. 1357/1938-39 he left for Mecca to perform the pilgrimage.

However, on his way to Mecca, he (and his colleague, *Šayh* Muhammad Tāḡaddīn) stopped at Harqiqo near Massawa where the Muslim elders of the town, in recognition of his erudition and piety, offered him the position of *imām* of the Mīrganī Mosque which he accepted. He served in that capacity for several years.²⁰ Subsequently, he traveled to Mecca and performed the *haḡḡ*.

On his return to Wällo, *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī studied ‘*Ālā*’ al-Dīn al-Haskafī’s *Durr al-Muhtār šarh tanwīr al-absār* (a textbook of Hanafī *fiqh*) under *al-Hāḡḡ* Ahmad of Qallu. This was the second time for him to be tutored by the renowned master of *fiqh*. On the completion of his studies, he received an *iḡāza* that reads:

¹² *Bilāl*, No.1 (*Mäskäräm* 1985 E.C.), p. 16. According to the Arabic version of the account, written by *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Wāle Ahmad under the title ‘Nubda ‘an hayāt šayhinā al-rāhil *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tānī,’ he was born at the village of Adola Agär: *Bilāl*, p. 36.

¹³ A.H. 1332: *ibid.*, *I’lām*, A.H. 1332/1907 E.C./1914/15.

¹⁴ *Bilāl* (Arabic version), p. 36.

¹⁵ Informant: *al-Hāḡḡ* Husayn Sayid (Addis Ababa, 23 December 2006).

¹⁶ *I’lām*, *loc.cit.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *I’lām*, p. 426.

¹⁹ According to *I’lām*, *loc.cit.*, this happened after his return from pilgrimage.

²⁰ One year, according to *I’lām*, p. 426. In this source, there is no reference to Muhammad Tānī’s serving as *imām*.

In the name of Allāh, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Thanks be to Allāh [who] made us the of His laws and the disseminators of his [legal] prescriptions for [his] creatures. May Allāh's blessings be upon him and his family and on his party of the successful. And now. I have granted to my son, Muhammad Tānī *al-Hāḡḡ* Ḥabīb Bašīr, in recognition of his mastery of all the subjects, texts, commentaries and annotations that he had studied under me in general, an authentic certificate on this blessed day, 16 *Muharram*, A.H.1361. May Allāh enable him to get whatever pleases him.²¹

Šayh Muhammad Tānī and his lifelong colleague traveled to Albukko to pursue their higher Islamic studies under Šayh Ahmad Nure,²² and mastered six subjects: *tafsīr*, *balāḡa*, *mantiq*, 'arūd, *tawhīd* and *usūl al-fiqh*. Šayh Ahmad also granted Muhammad Tānī the following *iḡāza*:

In the name of Allāh, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Thanks be to the one God. May Allah's blessings be upon he after whom there is no prophet. After my salutation I wish to inform you, my son, *al-Šayh* Muhammad Tānī, that I hereby grant you, on account of all what you studied with me, an authentic certificate in the month of *rabī' al-tānī*, A.H. 1363.²³

Šayh Muhammad Tānī married Kubrā bt. Šayh Sa'īd Mansūr of Wärrä Himāno who bore him six sons: Muhammad Nūr, 'Abd al-Rahmān, Husayn, Bašīr, Ahmad and Hasan, and two daughters, Maryam and Rahma.

In 1952/53 he accompanied his teacher, Šayh Ahmad Nure, to Däse where he settled and taught at the Islamic school (*madrāsāt al-ahliyya al-islāmiyya*, founded in 1936 A.D., and started its operation in 1940 A.D.),²⁴ attached to the Sāwa Bārr Mosque.²⁵ According to another version, it was Šayh Sayid Muhammad Sādiq (see below) who persuaded Šayh Muhammad Tānī's to leave the countryside and settle in Däse.²⁶ At his residence he taught many 'ulamā'. At the same time he privately acquired modern education up to the twelfth grade,²⁷ and became literate in the writing and reading of Amharic.

²¹ *Bilāl* (Arabic version), p. 36.

²² Šayh Ahmad Nure was initiated into the Sammānī order by Amīr Husayn b. 'Abd al-Wāhid and was *qādī* of Albukko during the Italian occupation. He died on A.H. 7 *Ġamād al-Ahira* 1367/28 April 1948: *I'lām*, p. 197.

²³ *Bilāl*, p. 38.

²⁴ A report compiled in Arabic by the Däse branch of the Islamic Council of South Wällo administrative zone.

²⁵ Another teacher of the school was Šayh Sayid Muhammad Sādiq (d.1977): *I'lām*, p. 426. In order to ensure the continuation of the *madrasa*, he and Šayh Muhammad Tānī sought financial assistance from the *Rābitat al-'Ālam al-Islāmī* (The Muslim World League) through the Saudi Embassy in Addis Ababa.

²⁶ Informant: Idrīs Muhammad (Addis Ababa, 25 December 2006).

²⁷ This is not confirmed by other written sources.

From 1951 (1958/59) to 1967 (1974/75), he taught a basic course on Islam to Muslim students at the *Wāyzāro* Sehin Comprehensive Secondary School in Dāse,²⁸ and was selected as one of the co-translators of the Holy Qur’ān on the orders of Emperor Haile Sellassie I.

In 1967 E.C. he moved to the capital to start work on the translation of the Qur’ān. From 1969 (1976/78) to 1971 (1978/79) he taught at the *Dāḡḡazmač* ‘Umar Sāmātār School located within the premises of the Anwar Mosque and became deputy *imām*, (and in 1971 *imām* and *hatīb* [deliverer of the Friday sermon] of the mosque)). He also privately taught *hadīt*, *balāḡa*, *tafsīr* and *mantiq* to advanced students at his home. The following were among the prominent ‘*ulamā*’ who completed their studies under his supervision:

Al-Hāḡḡ Šayh ‘Abd al-Hamīd al-Nahwī
Šayh Muhammad [Zayn] Bušrā
Šayh Muhammad Hamza
Šayh ‘Umar Idrīs (currently chairman of the Addis Ababa chapter of the Islamic Council)
Šayh Muftī
Šayh Sa‘īd Yūsuf (brother-in-law of Šayh Muhammad Tānī)
Šayh Mustafā Habīb
Šayh Dū Makāna Ġamāl (the late *imām* of the Anwar Mosque)
Šayh Muhammad Ahmad
Šayh Muhammad Zayn Zahr
Šayh Sa‘īd Mustafā
Šayh Muhammad Wāle

After the outbreak of the revolution, Šayh Muhammad Tānī became the founding chairman of the *Maḡlis* (Ethiopian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs), a member of the central committee of the national literacy campaign, the relief coordination committee and several other national committees. In early *Māskārām* 1967, he led a Muslim delegation to, and had an audience with, Lt. Colonel Aman Mika’el Andom, chairman of the *Dārg*, and on behalf of Ethiopian Muslims, he expressed support for the ongoing changes.²⁹ On the occasion of the first official celebration of ‘*Īd al-Fitr*, he reiterated such support and made a reference to the fact that in the past, a delegation representing the Muslim residents of Addis Ababa used to go to the imperial palace twice annually after the two ‘*Īd* prayers in order to express their good wishes to the emperor on the occasion of the celebration of the Islamic festivals.³⁰ He noted that after

²⁸ Šayh Muhammad Tānī actually taught at the school from 1939 to 1956 E.C.

²⁹ Hussein Ahmed, ‘Islam and Islamic Discourse in Ethiopia (1973-1993),’ p. 782.

³⁰ This obligatory and ceremonial act of allegiance to the Emperor was a cause for resentment among members of the Muslim elite who saw it as adding insult to injury since the Islamic festivals were not then officially declared as public holidays. In a recent interview with an Islamic newspaper, a contemporary Muslim scholar trained abroad as a medical doctor recalled an occasion when he was invited to join a delegation that was about to pay the customary visit to the palace. He had then responded: ‘This is our holiday. Why should we go to him [the Emperor] and congratulate him? On the contrary, he should broadcast his congratulatory message either over the radio or by whatever means he wants. Why are we expected to congratulate the *Ġanhoy*?’ Unconvinced by his argument and most probably apprehensive of the reaction of the office of chief protocol of the palace if they did not go, the members of the delegation left without him: *Ġum’a*, vol.1, no.21, 21 *Tahsas* 1999 E.C./10 *Dū’l-Hiḡḡa* 1427/30 December 2006. ‘[Interview with] the [medical] doctor and poet, Sa‘īd Ahmad Busayr,’ p.7. It is worth noting that Šayh Sayid Muhammad Sādiq, co-translator of the Qur’ān, was Dr.

the revolution, they were allowed to celebrate the festival within the premises of the principal mosque in the presence of senior government officials. He also alluded to the fact that Ethiopian Muslims had long been prevented from taking part in national affairs and discriminated against in education, administration and the army. Finally, he called upon the government to grant land for the construction of a new mosque in the capital.³¹ In the succeeding years he was elected as a member of the national *Šāngo* (parliament). He attended many international conferences (including one on world peace and disarmament/*détente* held the USSR), Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Algeria and other countries. He also took part in an interreligious seminar organized by the government and held from 28 to 30 March 1978 at which he "...expressed appreciation of the fact that Islam had been placed on an equal footing with other religions in Ethiopia."³²

Šayh Muhammad Tānī played a crucial role in facilitating the construction of mosques in and outside Addis Abāba, and the establishment and expansion of orphanages by personally endorsing applications for financial and material assistance submitted to him, and approaching Ethiopian Muslim and foreign philanthropists and organizations.

Šayh Muhammad Tānī's contribution to public and community service was as impressive and outstanding as his accomplishments in Islamic religious scholarship and preaching. He played an active role in transforming the Anwar Mosque from a venue for only formal ritual services into a centre of a vigorous, organized and vibrant social, intellectual and spiritual life and of theological and legal discourse based on consensus, tolerance and legitimacy of diversity and dissent, thereby setting a trend for, and impacting, the wider Muslim community in the country at large.

Death

Following a long illness, *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī was admitted into the Black Lion hospital on A.H. 01 *Ramadān* 1409/6 April 1989). After three weeks of treatment, he passed away at 2:15 p.m. on Friday 23 *Ramadān*/10 *Miyazya* 1981 E.C./ 28 April 1989. His funeral was attended by an estimated crowd of 300,000 people including the patriarch, *Abunā* Märqoréwos, Tāfārra Wändé, deputy prime minister and member of the central committee of the Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), and other senior Ethiopian government officials, leaders of other religious communities, ambassadors, representatives of international organizations, colleagues, friends and family members. He was buried at the Kolfe Muslim cemetery in Addis Abāba.³³ Both at the time of his death and after the end of the period of mourning, many people openly admitted that *Šayh al-Hāğğ* Muhammad Tānī was irreplaceable, but they soon reconciled themselves to that eventuality as readily as they had accepted the reality of his demise. The author of his brief Arabic biography composed the following lines about the symbolic significance and actual impact of his life and death:

Sa'īd's uncle.

³¹ Hussein, 'Islam and Islamic Discourse...', p. 784.

³² Øyvind M. Eide, *Revolution & Religion in Ethiopia: the Growth & Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85* (Oxford: James Currey, Athens: Ohio University Press, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press, 2000), p. 164.

³³ The news of his death and funeral was announced over the national radio and television, and short accounts of his life published in the two government dailies, *Addis Zāmān* (Amharic) and *The Ethiopian Herald*, and the Arabic weekly, *al-'Alam*. Although the present writer sent an obituary to the *Times* of London, it was never published ostensibly due to lack of space, even though the obituary of a patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church had been printed earlier.

*laqad māta tawd al-‘ilm wa’l-hilm wa’l-tuqā
wa azlama arḡā’ al-nawāhī bifaqdihi wasālat
dumu’ al-ša‘b ka’l-ḡayt al-hātil imām usiba
al-qawm tarran bimawtihi liyabkīh masḡid fī yawm
wa fī’l-layl litabkīh jum‘at wahutbatuhu al-ahlā
liyabkīh tafsīr bidam‘ihi al-hātil watabkīh ḡurfat
wamaktab maḡlis walaḡnat da‘wat fī kulli al-asā’il*³⁴

Indeed died the mountain of knowledge, forbearance and devoutness
His absence darkened all the directions of the horizon
The tears of people poured down like heavy rain
[He] was the imām by whose death people were much aggrieved
Let the mosque weep day and night
Let Friday and his sweet sermon weep
Let the exegesis shed its tears
Let the room and office of the Maḡlis weep
And the committee of the da‘wa in every place

He concluded: “wa ammā dakā’ihi wa ‘ilmihi fahuwa bahr qa’ruhu ‘amīq.” (As for his intelligence, cleverness and knowledge, it is [like] a sea whose depth is profound.”)

Publications

Besides co-translating the Qur’ān³⁵ (with *Šayh* Sayid Muhammad Sādiq), *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ* Muhamamd Tānī was the author of the first full-length Amharic biography of the Prophet Muhammad³⁶ as well as a short introduction (in the form of questions and answers) to the rituals of the greater pilgrimage (*haḡḡ*) and the lesser pilgrimage (*‘umra*), the latter published posthumously. He also contributed an article in Amharic entitled “Mālkam Ar’aya” to the *Wäyzäro* Sehin Secondary School magazine, *Mäskäräm* (1956 E.C.).³⁷

An analysis of the contents of the article clearly reveals his grasp of the crucial importance of modern education. He noted that the awareness of the people about the value and benefits of education was limited and that in the past parents had to be persuaded through various incentives to send their children to school. However, after it was realized that “education was as essential as food and air,” the public demand for the establishment of schools increased. Besides, the government was unable to meet the growing demand. The author then analyzed the situation in the town of Däse by pointing out that there were only one secondary and three elementary schools, and an Islamic school financed by the Muslim community, in addition to some schools run by the Ethiopian Orthodox church and the Catholic missionaries. But in relation to the public demand and the size of the student population, the number of the existing schools is far from adequate.

³⁴ *Bilāl*, p. 35.

³⁵ *Qeaddus Qur’ān* (Addis Ababa: Artistic Printers Ltd, 1961 E.C./1968/69). Emperor Haylä Sellase gave the official order for the translation on 18 *Hamle* 1958/25 July 1966: *ibid.*, p. 8. The other scholars who took part in the work of translation and edition were *Šayh* Sayid Muhammad Sādiq, *Šal-Hāḡḡ* Bašīr Dāwūd, *Šayhs* ‘Abd al-Karīm Nūr Husayn and Bušralkarīm Mustafā (the latter from Wällo), and *al-Hāḡḡs* Yūsuf ‘Abd al-Rahmān of Harār, Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahmān of Tegray, Ahmad Dalātti of Šäwa and Manzārahu Kabīr Husayn of Arsi.

³⁶ *Eslemenna enna Yätallaqu Nabiyy YäMuhammad Tarik* (Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Sälam Printing Press, *Mäskäräm* 1960/September/October 1967).

³⁷ I am grateful to Idrīs for drawing my attention to, and giving me a copy of, the article.

Šayh Muhammad Tānī then discussed the problems that students from the rural areas faced in towns one of which was insufficient government stipends which were given only to students who scored high marks (those from the countryside could not achieve this). As a result many poor students attended classes in conditions of hardship. Since all students of grades seven and eight went to the high school, those coming from remote districts such as Tita, Qālām Meda, Sāyyo, Gārado and Ruga had to leave their homes very early in the morning, often without taking breakfast, and arrived at school late. At the end of the morning shift, they stayed in the school compound with no lunch. In the afternoon, while the other students living in the town returned to school after relaxing in their homes, those from the countryside, attended classes on empty stomach., and trekked back to their villages where they reached after dark.

In order to solve this problem, the teachers of the high school contributed money to prepare lunch for the students from the countryside. The coordinator was an American called Kilhefner. In 1955 E.C. (1962/63) a committee was set up for that purpose. That year (1956 E.C.), between 70 and 80 students were assisted by the committee. They were engaged in the work of cleaning up the school compound and gardening, fetching firewood and washing of utensils. Finally, the writer made a strong appeal to people and organizations to assist the poor students.³⁸

Conclusion: *Al-Hājj* Muhammad Tānī's legacy to posterity

Many Ethiopian Muslim scholars with the talent for, and interest in, writing -- and most of them did not use the former or show the latter -- had a preference for Arabic as a medium of literary expression. This was partly because of their mastery of the language and partly because they were not literate in Amharic, owing to the traditional Islamic educational system that flourished in the rural areas and which did not either use Amharic as a medium of instruction or did not include the teaching of Amharic as one of the indigenous languages of the country. Since Šayh Muhammad Tānī had, through his efforts and on his own initiative, acquired literacy in Amharic (in addition, of course, to his proficiency in Arabic), all his existing published works were written in Amharic. Therefore, he was one of the pioneers in the use of Amharic for the dissemination of knowledge about Islam among ordinary Muslims who were not conversant in Arabic. His keen awareness of the need for enabling non-Arabic-speaking Ethiopian Muslims to increase their knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam and Islamic history through access to published materials written in Amharic is best reflected in the prefaces to his co-translation of the Qur'ān, the biography of Prophet and his shorter work on the pilgrimage cited earlier. His messages of admonition (Ar. sing: *wa'z*), recorded on cassettes, which are still widely and eagerly listened to, have played a similar role.

It is worth noting that during the period of Šayh Muhammad Tānī's chairmanship of the Islamic Council, there was no open and deep conflict among its members, a reflection of his ability to keep under control divisive forces, thereby preventing direct state intervention. After his death, however, internal dissension and struggle for power led to frequent re-organization, elections, re-elections and the weakening of the Council. The climax of this process of steady decline and internal crisis was the 1995 violent incident at the Anwar Mosque.

³⁸ *Māskārām*, pp. 50-51.

Šayh Muhammad Tānī promoted and sustained stable and realistic relations between Islam and the state in Ethiopia through compromise, wisdom, negotiation and the reconciliation of the expectations of a modern quasi-secular monarchy and the military regime (whose political ideology was later to become hostile to established religion), by taking into account the post-1974 socio-economic and political changes in the country, on the one hand, and the aspirations and demands of articulate and conscious Muslim professional and religious elites and commoners, and the challenges emanating from, and currents of change sweeping across, the Muslim world, to which Ethiopian Muslims were beginning to respond and react, on the other.

For *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī, the gains of Islam in Ethiopia after 1974 were too decisive and precious to be compromised and possibly undermined by a head-on confrontation with the regime that later imposed new restrictions on Islam and was responsible for the loss of his two sons (and those of his coreligionists and Christian citizens); hence his reluctance to express, even mildly, any protest against the injustice both as an individual and a community leader.

Perhaps the most important gain for Islam after the revolution was the official proclamation that legalized the three principal Islamic religious festivals (*ʿĪd al-Fitr*, *ʿĪd al-Adhā* and *Mawlid al-Nabī*) as public holidays. This was an unprecedented and fundamental policy decision that was universally and enthusiastically welcomed by Ethiopian Muslims, and was one of the factors that galvanized the support of the Muslims for the new regime. During the imperial era, recognition of the Islamic holidays did not go beyond brief mention in the government media either on the eve or the day – and often on the morrow – of their celebration, often associated with the visit of Muslim dignitaries to the palace where they were met by the emperor, to whom they expressed best wishes, and whose accomplishments they glorified, and attended a modest reception hosted by him. Government offices, schools and shops owned by Christians remained open. On the other hand, during Christian holidays, shops owned and run by Muslims (including schools) were completely closed down.

Another gain for Ethiopian Muslims was that their religion acquired space in the public sphere. It became more visible both to the state and the wider community. During official functions, anniversary celebrations and major mass gatherings, the leaders and members of the Muslim community stood out conspicuously. The former were accorded a symbolic status of parity with those of the Christian (Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant) communities. As an officially acknowledged and recognized spiritual leader of Ethiopian Muslims, *imām* of the Grand Anwar Mosque and chairman of the Islamic Council, *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tānī often took his seat which was placed alongside that of the *abun*. This newly-enhanced public image was perceived as a manifestation of the reassertion of the identity and equality of Islam and Ethiopian Muslims at the national level, and of the end of their centuries-long marginalization and stigmatization. On the other hand, some conservative elements within the Muslim community disapproved of *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tānī's policy of *rapprochement* with the political establishment and of his public appearance with the highest ecclesiastical authority of the Orthodox Church, long identified as an ally of the state that had oppressed Muslims in the past. It is a mark of his political maturity, wisdom and pragmatism that he successfully and peacefully overcame this opposition and persisted in his determination to secure for Islam the benefits brought by the revolutionary changes by loyally cooperating with the then government.

Although it continued to be considered as a minority religion, Islam enjoyed state patronage and protection, and benefited from its policy of benevolence, tolerance, accommodation and integration. However, the relations between the state and Islam came under severe strain following the adoption of a Marxist ideology that increasingly became hostile to organized religion and undermined the financial basis of both church and mosque through the confiscation of their urban properties. The campaign of terror unleashed against domestic opposition, of which the followers of both faiths became victims, military conscription and other restrictive measures further eroded the initial enthusiasm of Ethiopian Muslims for the changes initiated by the regime at the time of the outbreak and the early years of the popular revolution.

Unlike many people of his background, erudition and social stature who became famous after they had passed away, *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī acquired reputation and popularity while he was still alive, although these were further enhanced following his demise. There were at least three reasons for this. Firstly, he was known for his cool-headedness, perseverance and sense of humility, and for his avoidance of the spotlight, both socially and publicly, although he never showed any hesitation to take the initiative when it came to preaching, teaching and arranging reconciliation between individuals or factions. Secondly, his Friday sermons and religious injunctions during the congregational and supererogatory prayers³⁹ held in the evenings of *Ramadān*, were delivered in a lucid and simple language, left an indelible imprint on his listeners. His preaching (both private and public) was delivered not in the language of the modern elite but in colloquial Amharic which was flavored in the Wällo Muslim dialect and expressed coherently and incisively. Thirdly, his simple and unassuming demeanor and warm and intimate approach and treatment of people, the ever-present smile that radiated from his face, and his charismatic and pleasant personality inspired lifelong devotion among those who came to know him. According to an informant who belongs to a scholarly family and has himself acquired higher Islamic education in the country, *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī possessed many outstanding and unique qualities: forbearance (*hilm*), restraint, hospitality, steadfastness, kindness, compassion, honesty, accessibility and indefatigability. His private residence was home not only to his family but also innumerable visitors, old acquaintances, and teachers and their students as well as being a regular teaching centre and a venue for holding religious and social functions. Many people from all parts of the country came seeking his recommendations and intervention for securing financial and material assistance for the construction of mosques, orphanages and schools. They flocked into his office and home, day in and day out, giving him no respite from a demanding and taxing work schedule and no time for his own spiritual and scholarly pursuits. Anger, vindictiveness, agitation (both physical and emotional), and spontaneous reaction to criticism, threats and even insults were unknown to him throughout his life. Even in circumstances⁴⁰ in which such responses

³⁹ The latter are called *salāt al-tarāwīh*. At regular intervals, the *imām* leads the faithful in the recitation of verses in praise of the Prophet the refrain of one of which runs as follows: ‘*mawlāy sallī wasallam dāiman abada* (2), ‘*alā habībika hayr halqī kullihim*.’

⁴⁰ The execution by the *Dārg* of his two sons, ‘Abd al-Rahmān and Hasan, who were suspected of being members or sympathizers of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Party (EPRP) in 1977, is a case in point. According to an oral informant, the *imām* is believed to have reacted to the killing of his first son by saying: ‘They killed my son. They threaten to kill my second son. They may kill me as well. I have to be soft with them.’ Cited in Eide, *Revolution & Religion in Ethiopia*, p. 113. For a reference to a similar incident in another part of Ethiopia where holy men, including the three grandsons of *Faqīh* Ahmad b. ‘Umar, a *Tijānī šayh* from Nigeria, were killed by the *Dārg*, see Aman Seifedin, ‘Islam and the Muslim Community in Gommaa: A Historical Survey (1886-1974)’ (M.A. thesis in History, Addis

would have been perfectly justifiable and natural, he showed restraint and patience. With a sense of confidence, pride and self-righteousness, many people have likened his behaviour to that of the Prophet or his Companions. In short *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī was considered a paragon of moral integrity of the highest order, and of incorruptibility and fairness worthy of emulation by both his own colleagues and the ordinary faithful.

Years ago I heard an elderly *šayh* from Wällo say: “While *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī is well-versed in Amharic, he lacks the boldness and outspokenness of *Šayh* Muhammad Tāḡaddīn.” The following anecdote narrated by an informant sheds light on the contrasting character and temperament of the two *šayhs*. During their first pilgrimage, the two colleagues attended a lecture delivered by a Wahhābī *šayh* in a mosque in Mecca in which he said that only the Qur’ān and the Sunna, not the four *madāhibs* were the basis of Islamic dogma and practices. This was tantamount to disregarding the contributions of the schools to the elaboration and codification of Islamic law and rejecting the legitimacy of the whole science of Islamic jurisprudence. *Šayh* Muhammad Tāḡaddīn rose up and asked the Saudi *šayh* the question: “What do you know about the views of the *madāhibs* on the procedures that Muslims should follow, such as the rubbing of the hair with water, while performing the ritual ablution (*wudu*)?” *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī tried unsuccessfully to stop him from confronting the *šayh*.

The Saudi *šayh*, enraged by the audacity of the Ethiopian scholar to criticize him and test his religious knowledge, and perhaps also influenced by the prevailing Arab racism towards black Africans, called one of the religious policemen (sing.: *mutawwa*‘) whom he ordered to arrest and imprison *Šayh* Muhammad Tāḡ al-Dīn. *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī pleaded, through the intervention of *al-Hāḡḡ* Ahmad b. Idrīs, a resident Ethiopian religious scholar and a pilgrim’s guide (*mutawwif*), with the Saudi *šayh* for *Šayh* Muhammad Tāḡaddīn’s immediate release under the pretext that the *šayh* was a lunatic suffering from periodic bouts of mental and nervous breakdown. The *šayh* was subsequently discharged from jail.

How can we explain this? It is not because of *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī’s lack of sensitivity to, and understanding of, the gravity and urgency of a given situation or the conditions of the wider community, not because it was unnecessary to react, but because of his very cautious and pragmatic approach to coping with new and unpleasant circumstances, and the fear that hasty and premature judgments and actions might lead to unexpected and harmful consequences for Islam and the Muslim community at large. Moreover, *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī grew up, and studied, in a society in which coexistence and tolerance were the dominant modes of inter-communal and inter-religious relations. He had taught at a government school at a time when the local Muslims were reluctant to send their children in order to acquire modern and secular education because of the fear that they might convert to Christianity and be influenced by its culture.

Perhaps the most outstanding intellectual legacy of *Šayh* Muhammad Tānī was his training and certification of a large number of both young and older scholars who pursued advanced Islamic studies under his supervision by attending regular and almost daily lecture sessions which he organized at his residence, reading and mastering the standard textbooks and their commentaries which he used, and taking and passing informal examinations he administered to check on their progress and proficiency. The

Ababa University, December 2006), p. 70.

most prominent of his students who later became scholars in their own right and trained others include *al-Hāḡḡ* ‘Umar Idrīs, the late *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Wāle Ahmad, and *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Rāfi‘. There is no more telling evidence for the vigorous and vibrant scholarly activities that he oversaw and directed from his residence (which was bought for him by a philanthropist) than the rich private collection of books which he bequeathed to his family and which are regularly consulted by students and their teachers.⁴¹

An anonymous admirer of *al-Hāḡḡ* Muhammad Tānī composed, in the form of a dirge, the following poem highlighting (with a certain degree of exaggeration that one would expect from a devotee) the sense of grief and loss felt by Muslims caused by his death and in recognition of his inimitable skill and style of teaching and preaching through a harmonious blend of the scriptural and mystical dimensions of Islam:

*Qur’ānem Hadīsem Allāh yesobbereh
Buruda Hamziyya Allāh yesobbereh
Hāḡi Sani yāllum yāmmiyaqqāmatteluh*

May Allāh grant patience to the Qur’ān and Hadīt
May Allāh grant patience to Buruda and Hamziyya⁴²
Al-Hāḡḡ [Muhammad] Tānī, who adored and treated
you with deepest affection, is no longer alive

Šayh Muhammad Tānī was a traditional Muslim scholar of the highest professional caliber and credentials but differed from some of his predecessors and contemporaries in four ways. Firstly, he had not traveled abroad to any centre of Islamic learning. Secondly, he acquired some modern education and teaching experience at public schools in a major town and the capital, and proficiency in written Amharic that enabled him to co-translate the Qur’ān and write a historical account of Islam and the life of the Prophet. Thirdly, he was fluent in classical Arabic although he did not go to a modern Islamic school and take courses designed on the basis of modern curricula and pedagogy. Fourthly, he was highly conscious of the demands and responsibilities of officialdom and its administrative routine, and the management and handling of relations between a religious community and its institutions, on the one hand, and the state and other religious communities in Ethiopia, on the other.

Perhaps no other Ethiopian Muslim scholar of the last century had achieved national prominence and attained a social status as popular, charismatic and highly revered leader of the Ethiopian Muslim community as did Šayh Muhammad Tānī. The memory of his cheerful and magnetic personality, noble character, religious piety, exemplary modesty, proverbial patience, generosity and tolerance, scholarly competence, the coherence of his teaching and preaching, the beauty of his spoken language, active participation in public life and national affairs, and impeccable moral integrity, will continue to a source of pride and inspiration for the present and future generations of Ethiopian Muslims.

⁴¹ Unfortunately, I was unable to consult his collection at the time of the research for this paper. I have learnt that there are some private letters exchanged between him and his colleagues, official letters he wrote and replies he received, and texts of his Friday sermons and lectures, *manzūmāt* (panegyrics), even diaries and texts of speeches he delivered at public functions, and lectures recorded in cassettes, all of which deserve to be collected and studied.

⁴² Two famous works in praise of the Prophet recited during the celebrations of the *Mawlid*

Bibliography

- Addis Zāmān*. 22 *Miyazya* 1981 E.C.
- Aman Seifedin. 2006. 'Islam and the Muslim Community in Gommaa: A Historical Survey (1886-1974).' M.A. thesis in History, Addis Abāba University.
- Bilāl*. (Islamic magazine). No.1, *Mäskärām* 1985 E.C./September-October 1992).
- Eide, Øyvind M. 2000. *Revolution & Religion in Ethiopia: the Growth & Persecution of the Mekane Yesus Church 1974-85*. Oxford: James Currey, Athens: Ohio University Press, Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Ethiopian Herald*. 30 April 1989.
- Hussein Ahmed. 1988. 'Introducing an Arabic Hagiography from Wällo.' In: Taddese Beyene, ed. *Proceedings of the Eighth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Frankfurt am Main/Huntingdon. Vol.I, pp. 185-197.
- . 1989. 'The Life and Career of *Shaykh* Talha b. Ja'far (c.1853-1936).' *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol.XXII, pp.13-30.
- . 1994. 'Islam and Islamic Discourse in Ethiopia (1973-1993).' In: Harold G. Marcus, ed. *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Lawrenceville, N.J. Vol.I, pp. 775-801.
- . 2003. '*Al-Hājj* Bushrā Ay Muhammad: Muslim Reformer, Scholar and Saint in Nineteenth-Century Wallo, Ethiopia.' In: Bertrand Hirsch and Manfred Kropp, eds. *Saints, Biographies and History in Africa*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 175-190.
- . 2004. '*Shaykh* Jawhar b. Haydar b. 'Alī: A Mystic and Scholar of Shonkē, southeast Wallo, Ethiopia.' *Annales d'Ethiopie*, Vol.XX, pp. 47-56.
- Ğum'a* (Islamic newspaper). Vol.I, No.1. *Tahsas* 1999 E.C.
- Mäskärām* (school magazine). 1956 E.C./1964-64.
- Muhammad Nūr, *Faqīh*. 1885. *Nasīhat al-Murīdīn*. (MS)
- Muhammad Tāḡaddīn Ahmad, *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ*. *I'lām al-aḡbiyā' bihayāt 'uzamā' Ityūbiyā min al-'ulamā' wa'l-awliyā' wa'l-salātīn al-Islām wa'l-asfiyā'* (MS)
- Muhammad Wāle Ahmad, *Šayh al-Hāḡḡ*. 2005. *Kitāb Īqāz humam al-aḡbiyā' birašh qatrat min al-tarāḡim al-'ulamā' wa'l-awliyā' fī ġumhūriyat Ityūbiyā*. Addis Ababa. Naḡāšī Publishers.

On the Filming of “Pilgrimage to Ya’a”

Yasuo Matsunami¹ and Minako Ishihara

Ya’a is one of the main centers of the ‘Tijjānī Cult’, a regional cult developed around the veneration of the *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar. The residents of Ya’a are responsible for maintaining the mausoleum and other facilities. This article not only expounds the details of the procedures in filming the pilgrimage ritual, but also focuses on the limitations and merits in adopting the filming method in the representation of pilgrimage.

1. Introduction

Ya’a is one of the nodal centers of the ‘Tijjānī Cult’ (Ishihara 2007), an indigenized version of the Tijjānīya Order introduced in western Ethiopia in the first half of the twentieth century.

Ya’a is one of the biggest pilgrimage centers for Muslims in Ethiopia (Jabo 1988). It is located on the western fringe of the country near the Sudan border. Ya’a became a pilgrimage center only after the Tijjānī *shaykh*, *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar, came to Ethiopia led by divine orders from Borno (Nigeria), and died there in 1953 (Ishihara 1997). A mausoleum was built on the tomb and people (mainly Muslim Oromo from western Ethiopia) who revere *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar settled around the mausoleum, to form a village in the midst of land mainly inhabited by the Nilo-Saharan peoples of the Mao, Komo, Berta and others.

The population of the Ya’a mausoleum village is about 1,000², mainly consisting of Oromo settlers from Western Ethiopia, i.e. from Illubabor, Jimma and Western Wälläga. The residents of Ya’a are responsible for maintaining the mausoleum and other facilities associated with it. The residents, organized under the Mosque Committee, are also operators of the pilgrimage ritual, which takes place three times a year on Muslim festivals, i.e. the Arafā (‘Īd al-‘Adhā’), the Mawlid (Mawlid an-Nabī) and the Mi’rāj. Acknowledging common features found among pilgrimages in general found in Ethiopia (Pankhurst 1994), it is also important to point out that pilgrimages also have different properties closely associated with the personal characteristic of the founder of the pilgrimage center and cultural and historical backgrounds of the center (Eade and Sallnow 2000). In the case of the pilgrimage to Ya’a, its particularity resides in the interaction between the residents and the pilgrims.

Eade and Sallnow, in their critical essay on the contested features of sacred centers and the performance of pilgrimage, raised some important themes in which pilgrimage research should be directed. The point made in their argument is that researchers should focus on the diverse perceptions and discourses made about the pilgrimage and the

¹ Nanzan University, 18 Yamazato-Cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya, 466-8673, JAPAN. Author’s mail adress: y_matsunami@yaho.co.jp. A revised version of this paper is published under the title, "Filming Pilgrimage to Ya’a: Toward a Participatory Filmmaking" co-authored by Yasuo Matsunami and inako Ishihara, on *Nilo-Ethiopian Studies*(2008), No.13, pp.33-46.

² Ya’a belongs to the Ya’a Beldigis *qābāle*, Tongo *wārāda*, Beni Shangul and Gumuz Regional State.

pilgrimage center, and on how the pilgrimage center (re)produces its 'sacredness' through the exchanges between human beings and the divine (Eade and Sallnow 2000: 26-27). We intend to assert in this article that the practice of filming of the pilgrimage to Ya'a gives us the opportunity to expand and focus on some of these themes.

Pilgrimage to Ya'a is conducted because of individual reasons. Some pilgrims go to Ya'a to fulfill their votive offerings (*nazri*), and others go to Ya'a because they have troubles of their own, regarding some kind of illness of him/herself or a close relative, or regarding any aspect of their life. What they have in common is, apparently, their reverence or love for *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar. The veneration of *Al-Faki*, sustained by multiple dimensions of the 'Tijjānī Cult' still retains its vigor despite creeping influences of reformist assertions against such cults.

In the beginning of January 2006, a week before the celebration of Arafa, Matsunami accompanied a party of pilgrims traveling on foot to Ya'a, to co-experience the troubles they encounter and to inquire why they chose the alternative of conducting the pilgrimage on foot³.

Originally, pilgrimage to Ya'a was conducted on foot, because there was no road available for vehicles. Until the all weather road was constructed in 2002/3, the only possible method of transportation was heavy trucks. However, since a road connecting Ya'a to the main arterial road was constructed, not only the daily lives of residents of Ya'a, but also the environment of pilgrimage is undergoing drastic change. The population of pilgrims had expanded a great deal, and an increasing number of pilgrims are beginning to use chartered buses and trucks, whereas a handful of people are still conducting their pilgrimage on foot⁴.

Matsunami focused on these pilgrims traveling on foot in making his film on the pilgrimage to Ya'a (Matsunami 2006). Our initial assumptions were that those traveling on foot had more difficult problems to be solved than those who use transportation. However, by joining a party of pilgrims himself, he realized that the fatigue experienced in the process of pilgrimage and interactions with the Cult members on their way to Ya'a have as much significance for the pilgrims as the rituals conducted at Ya'a.

This article also gives details of the rituals at Ya'a to see how residents of Ya'a interact with the pilgrims, exchanging sacred elements '(re)produced' at Ya'a. The distribution of sacred elements represented in the feasting ceremony is a climatic moment in the ritual process of pilgrimage at Ya'a. The sacred elements are (re)produced by the residents who are mainly hard-working agriculturalists, while some are talented engineers. They regard themselves as servants (*khādim*) of *Al-Faki*, bearing the responsibility of serving the pilgrims, in the same way the servants of *Al-Faki* had done in his lifetime. *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar was known for his generosity, and offering of meals (free of charge) for his guests is held as a symbolic act representing this aspect. The consumption of the meals distributed on Muslim festivals is a highlight event of the pilgrimage ritual, whereby the sacred elements produced by the residents are 'embodied' by the pilgrims, who, in turn, bless the residents for their labor.

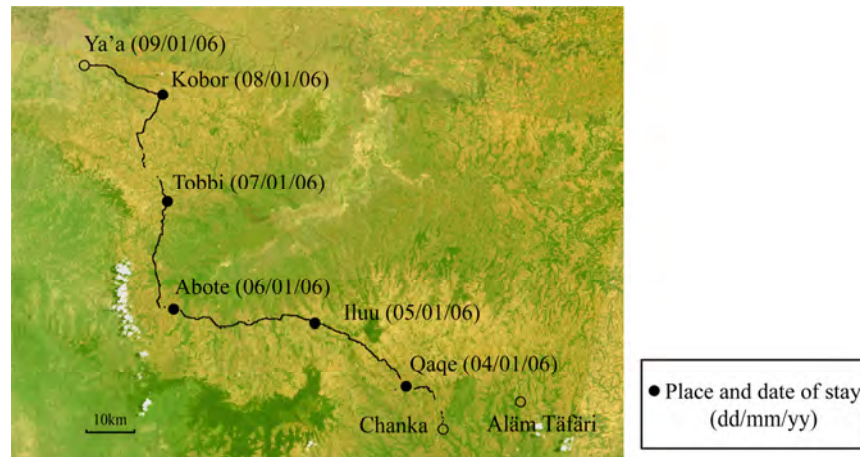
³ The research on which this article is based was conducted from December 2005 to January 2006, under the project subsidized by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research), entitled 'Anthropological Research on the Incorporation of Traditional Market System in the Modern State of Ethiopia' (Project Leader: Minako Ishihara, Nanzan University).

⁴ An estimation of the number of pilgrims traveling on foot is difficult to make, because many pilgrims arriving at Ya'a on foot partly used transportation on their way to and from Ya'a. And there are also pilgrims reaching Ya'a by vehicles who initially started their journey on foot.

2. Filming the process of pilgrimage

2-1. Encountering pilgrims

Following the network of the ‘Tijjānī Cult’, Matsunami searched for pilgrims traveling on foot at Minko (15km from Dembi Dolo), one of the centers of the Cult. However, not being able to come across anyone whom he could accompany at that time, he decided to start his trip with his assistant, Seifu *Abba* Madad from Chanka where the northward road to Gidami – Ya’a and the main arterial road intersects (Map 1). At Chanka, they encountered a group of pilgrims made up of about 10 Oromo men and women. They consented to his request to film them as they traveled on foot (Plate 1). The main reason why they were traveling on foot was financial. The fare requested for a one-way trip to Ya’a from Qaqe cost as much as 50 *birr*. So those pilgrims traveling on foot for financial reasons told him that they would opt for a ride if they were offered free trips. On the contrary, there were pilgrims traveling on foot because they had vowed to do so. They either had promised to come to Ya’a on foot if their prayers had been answered, or they had difficult problems yet to be solved.



Map 1. The pilgrimage route from Qaqe to Ya'a.
(From a Landsat satellite photograph)



Plate 1. Pilgrims traveling on foot.

A woman from Alām Täfäri said that she came on foot because she vowed to do so if her son came back safely from the battlefield. She had already made seven trips to Ya'a on foot ever since her son returned. A man from Dabo (Illubabor) has been conducting pilgrimage on foot every year, ever since he recovered from a disease that made his legs clenched in a fixed position.

2-2. The process of pilgrimage

Matsunami accompanied the party of pilgrims from Qaqe to Ya'a, which took 6 days (Map 1). They spent their nights at residences of followers of the 'Tijjānī Cult' living in certain distances on the pilgrimage route to Ya'a. Most pilgrims brought along grain of all sorts from home to be made into *injāra* on their way. At local mills, they ground the grain and had their hosts cook the flour into *injāra*. Some pilgrims brought loaves of bread from home. Customarily the hosts invited them to homemade stew, to be served with the *injāra* (or bread). The pilgrims seem to be taking turns in providing what they have brought along from home, and they kindly invited Matsunami and his assistant to the meal they shared. The paraphernalia the pilgrims carried included (roasted and ground) coffee beans, a kettle, a small-sized kerosene lamp, and other personal belongings, all wrapped in one piece of cloth.

Pilgrims walked as much as 20 - 30km per day, without hurry. Because the group included old men, women and young mothers carrying babies on their backs, they proceeded in a slow pace. When one of them lagged behind, the other members waited for him/her to catch up. The pilgrims Matsunami accompanied came from one neighborhood, and they continued to stick together during their stay at Ya'a, and on their journey back home. This was considered important probably because the journey was full of danger and they needed to be confident enough to rely on one another.

In the morning, the pilgrims usually got up at 6:00. For breakfast, they normally had bread, sometimes with some fruit bought the day before. If there was a river or a well nearby, they prepared coffee using their kettles. While they traveled, they regularly conducted their obligatory prayers three times a day, before they set out on their day's

trip in the morning, after they finished their lunch at noon (Plate 2), and before they went to sleep. Nowadays, they carry water for ablution in plastic bottles, while some pilgrims use gourds. Whenever they came across a well or a river, they stopped to fill their bottles with water. They usually walked until 3 or 4 o'clock in the afternoon. They never walked after dusk, for fear of hyenas and robbers.



Plate 2. Prayer on the roadside at noon.

The group consisted of men and women from a wide range of generations. The oldest was a woman of 70 years of age, on her 13th trip to Ya’a on foot, and the youngest were two 14-year-old ladies who were going to Ya’a for the first time. The two ladies were traveling with their mothers, who had vowed to take them to Ya’a when their daughters had recovered from their illnesses. Most members of the group were experienced pilgrims, who knew which route was best, where the rivers and wells are located, and where they could encounter weekly markets and where they could find followers of the Cult that could provide them with shelter and food. Such information was directly transmitted to the younger generation by accompanying them on one of the trips.

The group was traveling according to their plans, but, happenings do occur and on the third day from Qaqe, the group could not reach their destination as they had planned. As a matter of fact, it was because Matsunami, overwhelmed by exhaustion, could not carry on the day’s journey any further. The older members, especially women, seemingly not used to travel long distances, were tougher than he had reckoned despite their worn-out shoes and the heavy burden they carried on their backs. At dusk, they reached a small quarter just outside the town, which was planned to be the destination of that day. They asked the owner of one of the houses if they could spend the night outside on the veranda. The host consented to their request, and gave them some fruit. The host was a Christian Oromo who knew about *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar by name and the pilgrimage to Ya’a, though never having been there himself. Being a professional *mäsinqo* (one-stringed violin) player, the host began practicing his *mäsinqo* in the house in resonance with the rhythmical *manzumas* (religious verses) and *du`ā`* (supplication) the pilgrims chanted outside on the veranda chewing *čat* (*Catha edulis*) in the twilight darkness.

On the fifth day, the party arrived at Kobor, an Oromo town, 20 km from Ya’a. This was the final night of their journey. At Kobor, they bought a cassette tape recorder and a cassette tape to record the *manzumas* performed at Ya’a. Many of the Oromo residents of Kobor were members of the Cult, and this town was where every pilgrim traveling on foot customarily spent their last nights before they entered Ya’a. The town of Kobor was only a half-a-day distance to Ya’a, and the residents had daily interaction with the residents of Ya’a. Some of the Muslim residents conducted their Friday prayers at Ya’a.

That night was spent at a private lodge (locally called *khalwa*) owned by a follower of the Cult. The lodge was specifically built to serve as a rest house for the pilgrims to Ya’a. He invited the party to dinner, as he spoke about his family and how the pilgrimage used to take place even during the ‘wartime’ in the 1980s⁵. He also intended to visit Ya’a for the Arafa festival.

The next morning, the party left Kobor at 7:00. The party encountered several other groups of pilgrims heading for Ya’a, because the road was the only way to reach there. They were readily recognized as pilgrims because of their paraphernalia, carrying big packages on their backs and cassette tape recorders in their hands. Parties partly intermingled on their way to Ya’a, but these remained temporary conjunctions and the parties parted on arrival at Ya’a.

At a small village called Gure, where the pathway leading to Ya’a diverted, every pilgrim underwent inspection by the police. Two policemen were stationed there, asking the pilgrims to show their ID cards and the contents of their baggage. One of the

⁵ This ‘war’ was conducted between the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) which was supported by the Sudan government, and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) which was supported by the Ethiopian government. The host lost two of his children in this ‘war’ (Matsunami 2006).

pilgrims had a dagger in his bag. This was entrusted to him by a passerby who asked him to take the dagger to Ya'a as a votive offering. However, this dagger was confiscated by the police for security reasons.

Passing the checkpoint, pilgrims became lively than ever, chanting a customary *manzuma*, expressing their veneration to *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar and the Prophet Muhammad. A middle-aged woman, overwhelmed by her emotional feelings, was moved to tears, repeatedly uttering 'Yaa, Ahmad Umar'. After leaving Gure, the party was overtaken by three buses heading for Ya'a, which was ten kilometers ahead. As they passed by, the drivers of the buses encouraged those pilgrims traveling on foot sounding their horns.

On entering Ya'a, the awaiting pilgrims welcomed those just arriving, chanting *manzumas*, which some pilgrims attempted tape recording. The welcoming circle gradually expanded, stirring up clouds of dust. At the end of the *manzuma*, the *Salat al-Fatih*, the central litany of the Tijāniya was recited by all those present, everyone exchanging greetings, kissing the back of each others' hands, and hugging one another. This was a climatic moment suggestive of Victor Turner's 'communitas' (Turner 1969).

3. Filming the ritual performances at Ya'a

3-1. Preparations for the pilgrimage rituals at Ya'a

When Matsunami reached Ya'a with his party, there were two days yet to be spent before Arafa was celebrated. Matsunami and his assistant went to stay at one of the residents of Ya'a, to whom he had been introduced beforehand by Ishihara, who had frequented Ya'a in the process of her research since 1994. The rest of the members of the party took shelter in the 'Dakil' (Fig. 1, the mosque customarily used for Thursday *hadras*⁶), where they found over 200 pilgrims already taking up shelter. There were other permanent and temporary shelters prepared particularly for the pilgrims. Early coming pilgrims had reached Ya'a a week beforehand and the shelters were already crowded with pilgrims.

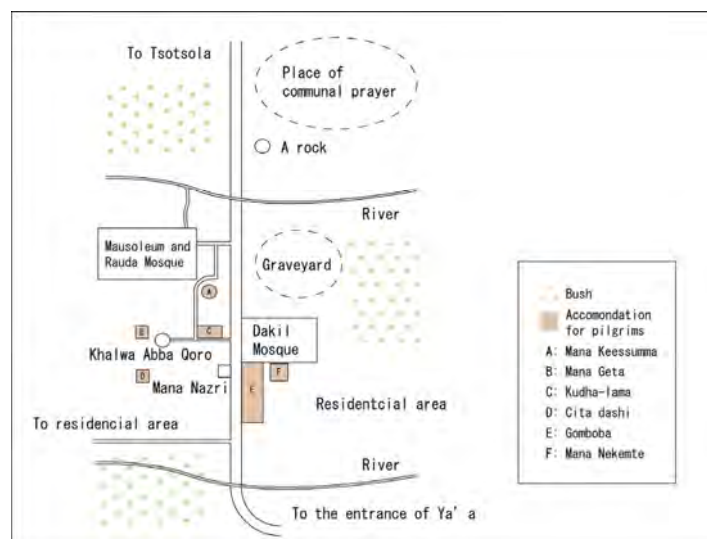


Fig.1. Layout of the mausoleum village of Ya'a

⁶ Regularly held religious gathering with the specific purpose for reciting litanies.

At that night, the pilgrims satisfied themselves with what they had brought from home and what they could buy from the provisional market open only at times of pilgrimage. Local residents living in and around Ya’a came to sell what they could and the pilgrims did not have to worry much to alleviate their hunger.

However the evening of the second day happened to be the eve of Arafa, which was celebrated with much enthusiasm. This was the night when the feasting (locally called *mawlid*) was to take place. The preparation of this feasting ritual was conducted under plans laid out long before the festival. The residents cooperated in cultivating the crop necessary to entertain the prospective guests and pilgrims. They collaborated in preparing the meals for the feasting ritual, building temporary shelters, mending and cleaning the mosque and waterways for ablution.

The preparation begins from the production of crops. Harvested sorghum and maize are stored in the warehouse owned by the Mosque Committee. The crop was ground by the “children of the mosque”⁷ about two weeks before the festivals, and distributed to the residents to be cooked into *injāra*.

Floured sorghum and maize was distributed basically to every household about a week before the festival. Normally, women baked the *injāras* individually at home, while men slaughtered the sacrificial beasts, cooking them in stew. The cooked *injāra* was collected and stored again in one of the warehouses of the Mosque Committee. The necessary amount of *injāra* was estimated from the amount consumed in the festival held the previous year. Based on this calculation, the amount of flour allotted to each household was decided by the Mosque Committee. The amount of *injāra* a household was ordered to make for the Arafa festival of 2006 was around 30 - 50 pieces. There being about 200 households in Ya’a, this sums up to 6,000 - 10,000 pieces.

Preparations for the pilgrimage also include construction of temporary shelters, a toilet and a shower room. Most of the temporary accommodations were constructed voluntarily in communal labor (*kidma*)⁸ on the last Thursday preceding the festival (Plate 3).



Plate 3. Residents preparing temporary shelters.

⁷ The “children of the mosque” are married and unmarried men and women brought up by the members of the Mosque Committee. They grew up to play a key role in the pilgrimage rituals, some of them becoming efficient organizers of the feasting rituals (Matsunami 2007).

⁸ The denomination ‘*kidma*’ is derived from the Arabic ‘*khidma* (service)’.

There are also some permanent accommodations for pilgrims in the village (Fig. 1). These accommodations had names, such as *Mana Keessumma* (or *Adarash*) (literally meaning, 'house of guests'), *Mana Nekemte* ('house of the Nekemte'), *Mana Geta* ('house of the lord'), *Kudha-lama* ('twelve', indicating the number of compartments), and *Gomboba*. Each had the sheltering capacity of about 100 - 200 people. Normally these permanent accommodations were occupied by wealthy pilgrims during the festivals. Among these permanent accommodations there was a compact but seemingly cozy hut called *Cita dashi*, which was only allotted to prominent descendants of *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar*⁹.

3-2. Rituals conducted on the day before the festival

Most pilgrims arrived at Ya'a on the day before the Arafa. These pilgrims were mainly those who used chartered buses and large vehicles, and so, could travel on schedule. The number of vehicles that arrived that day was over ten, while vehicles that already had reached Ya'a were only two. These buses came from a variety of places, such as Addis Ababa, Gondar, Bambesi, Asosa, Gimbi, and Nekemte. There were also trucks coming short distances from Asosa, Tongo and Bambesi. Those using transportation are mostly wealthy people, but apparently none have come only to spend their holidays or only for sightseeing. They also seem to have their own personal reasons for making the pilgrimage.

The pilgrims spent the day idly in a relaxed way, enjoying reunion with friends and shopping in the marketplace. A merchant came from Sudan crossing the border to sell several kinds of medical herbs and minerals, perfume and dried fish. The merchants were seated along the main road which divides the village in half running in a north-south direction (Fig. 1). A resident of Ya'a, talented in drawing, was selling his picture of the mosque and mausoleum painted in white on a blue sheet. Children were selling food, such as raw corns, bananas, oranges, pineapples, mangos, and papayas. They also sold merchandize vended in local *suqs*, such as soaps, incense, sugar, matches, packets of tea and razor blades.

Incense, sugar and matches were indispensable items for performing the *hadra*. The *ĉat* used in *hadras* was purchased from children who sold it on behalf of their parents who were busy taking care of pilgrims. *Ĉat* is an important cash crop for the residents of Ya'a. The income gained in one night by *ĉat* reaches about 200 *birr* per household. This amounts to a month's income of *ĉat* at ordinary periods.

The small lodge called "*Mana Nazri* (lodge for votive offerings)" is the place where the pilgrims dedicate their votive offerings. This lodge is located on the left side of the main pathway (Fig. 1). One of the residents stood in charge, and listening to the pilgrims' reasons for the offering, he conducts the *du`ā'* on behalf of the supplicant. After the *du`ā'*, he accepts the offerings, in most cases consisting of one or two packets of incense sticks¹⁰. Seeing, by chance, a pilgrim offering five packets of incense sticks at the lodge, Matsunami asked her why. She explained that she was requested to do so by her neighbor on her behalf because the neighbor couldn't arrange herself to come on this occasion. Other offerings included products of local specialty such as coffee of Gimbi, honey of Gojjam, and the like.

⁹ None of the descendants of *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar* live in Ya'a.

¹⁰ Incense sticks are available almost anywhere in the countryside, cheap ones costing no more than 3-5 *birr* a packet.

There were many other pilgrims who proffered cattle and sheep as offerings. These offerings were brought not to the *Mana Nazri*, but directly to the area where sacrificial slaughtering were being conducted. There were four or five residents, all men, stationed here to accept the offerings and to perform the *du`ā`* on behalf of the pilgrims. They were in charge of slaughtering the cattle and preparing stew with the meat. This stew will be served to the pilgrims with *injāra* for dinner. The enormous amount of stew necessary is cooked in halved oil drums.

There were also a number of Christian pilgrims coming from Gojjam and Asosa. For these pilgrims, the stew with meat was not served and they were given chicken or sheep to be slaughtered and cooked by themselves.

During the daytime and in the evening, pilgrims gathered for *hadrās* in groups mainly consisted of people coming from the same village or district. Each group shared their *ṣat*, making supplications to God, occasionally summoning the intercession of *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar*.

At 8:00 in the evening, one of the residents made an announcement using a loudspeaker urging them to return to their seats, so that meal could be served. This was the climatic moment of the festival, the serving of the *mawlid*, a spectacular event in which the interaction between the pilgrims and the residents reached a climax. Those residents in charge of distributing the meal queued up for *injāra* to be piled on their plates and stew to be poured on top. After that, each resident, carrying a large plate of *injāra* over their shoulders dispersed in the crowd of pilgrims distributing the meal (Plate 4). These residents took great care so that every pilgrim had the chance to have his/her share in the meal. The residents make sure that no one is left out, or is served twice. The pilgrims start their meal with the usual saying, "*bismillāhi ar-rahmāni ar-rahīm*". When meal was finished, the pilgrims thanked God, and recited the *Salāt al-Fātih*. After recitation of the verse, every pilgrim took a portion of the leftover pieces of the meal, even if it was a small crumb, with their hands and cleared the plate up. They claim that the remnants, on which they conducted the *du`ā`* and recited the *Salāt al-Fātih*, are charged with the *baraka* (blessing) supplicated by the participants. Making sure that each group had finished their meal, the residents took away the empty plates. The plates were carried to the warehouse of the Mosque Committee, where the residents, mainly married women and girls belonging to the “children of the mosque”, washed them.



Plate 4. Plates of *injāra* with stew ready to be distributed to pilgrims

After the meal, the pilgrims returned to their *hadra* gatherings. Pilgrims chewed *čat* as they chanted the *manzuma*, conducted the *du`ā* and chatted with one another. If they happened to sit near a group that had a good *manzuma* performer, they joined the circle of the group, chanting in resonance to the performer, while, in some cases, tape recording the *manzuma*. The *hadra* festivities continue until the day breaks.

3-3. The festival

At 6:00 in the morning, on the day of the Arafā, many residents and pilgrims washed their body in the river that flows just outside the village. Men gathered upstream, while women gathered downstream in a bushy space relatively hidden from the outside. At around 7:00, pilgrims had breakfast. The breakfast was prepared in groups, instead of being served by the Ya'a residents. These groups shared what they had, even if it was a piece of bread or some biscuits brought from home. Some made do with some fruits or locally baked bread sold in the morning markets. Surprisingly, there were no merchants selling hot tea or coffee in the market, normally found in any pilgrimage site. However, breakfast seems to have been served to the descendants of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar and some of the guests who were considered special in terms of their wealth and social status. These special guests spent their nights separately either in the '*Mana Geta*', '*Mana Keessumma*', or '*Cita Dashi*'.

At 8:30 in the morning, residents including elderly *shaykhs* (religious leaders) gathered at '*Khalwa Abba Qoro* (prayer lodge of *Abba Qoro*¹¹)'. A set of microphone and amplifier was prepared for the communal prayer. These facilities were brought from Addis Ababa by a wealthy pilgrim for the festival. The residents headed by *Sharif Sālih*¹² led the pilgrims in a queue, to the open field at the northern side of the village, reciting, "*Allāhu akbar* (Allah is great), *Allāhu akbar*, *Allāhu akbar*, *lā-ilāha-illallāh* (There is no god but Allah)". Slowly moving forward, it took about ten minutes for the crowd to reach the field. On arriving at the field, they sat down side-by-side forming lengthy parallel lines (Plate 5), turning their backs to the village, facing northward, the direction of Mecca. Women took their positions at the rear of men. The *Imam* of Ya'a sat in front of the lines, to guide the prayer. At 9:20, the *Imam* stood up, and the others followed suit. The prayer was conducted in the same way as the Friday prayer, i.e. performing two *rak'as*. After the prayers, the *Imam* turned around facing the people, and made a preach in Arabic.

¹¹ '*Abba Qoro*' literally meaning landlord, is the commonly known name of *Hajj* Adam *Abba* Diko (or *Abba* Wari *Abba* Diko), who was head administrator of the community of followers of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar. As a skillful engineer, *Hajj* Adam, until his death in 1978/79, laid the foundations of the village of Ya'a, which developed into a prosperous self-sufficient community.

¹² *Sharif Sālih*, one of the oldest members of the residents of Ya'a, was born in Yemen, and was a loyal contemporary of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar.



Plate 5. Communal prayer in the open field

At 9:40, the *Imam* finished his preach, and the people stood up and slowly moved back to the village. On their way back, many pilgrims stopped by a large rock which has a height of about three meters just at the northern edge of the village. At the top of this rock, people can have a good view of the whole village site of Ya’a. There is a tale that *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar first stood on top of this rock to point the location where his *khalwa* should be built. Because of this tradition, many pilgrims customarily perform their prayers on it, eventually creating three shiny shallow holes, indicating where the knees and forehead were placed.

At 10:00, as soon as they finished packing their belongings, pilgrims rushed for the buses and trucks stationed at the entrance of the village. The assistants shouted where each vehicle was heading for, while the drivers raced the engine of the vehicles. At 10:30, the first bus left Ya’a. And at about the same time, those pilgrims traveling on foot also left Ya’a. Whether those people leaving Ya’a on foot traveled all the way back to their home village was not verified because some pilgrims who left Ya’a on foot had the chance to take advantage of public transportation at Gure. Public transportation connecting Tongo and Bambesi was abundant, and was not as costly as chartered vehicles. Most of the drivers (or owners) of chartered vehicles came to Ya’a not with the intention of conducting pilgrimage but only for their own advantages. However, there was an exceptional case in which an owner of a bus, a pilgrim herself, offered transportation service free of charge for pilgrims from Ya’a to Bambesi. This was conducted as a votive offering, her supplication answered three years ago.

Before they left Ya’a, some pilgrims performed the *ziyāra* (visiting) at the mausoleum of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar to bid farewell. The mausoleum is founded on the northern side of the Rauda mosque. Inside the mausoleum, the pilgrims bowed and kissed the wall of the tomb, murmuring in supplication to *Al-Faki*, some even shedding tears. In contrast to the bustle outside, the atmosphere inside the mausoleum was that of tranquility. Some pilgrims remained there for as long as 30 minutes. Many pilgrims leave ignited incense sticks somewhere near the entrance, or on the fringe of the tomb behind the curtain covering it. There also was a rare case of a pilgrim leaving his letter for *Al-Faki* at the tomb.

At the watering facility inside the compound of the Rauda mosque, many pilgrims queued to fill their water jugs with *zamzam* (holy water). Almost every pilgrim carried some *zamzam* back home for medicinal use. There was a young lady from Gimbi

pouring water on her knee. She claimed that the *zamzam* took away the pain in her knee, which could not be healed by any other kind of medicine.

Just as the pilgrims began their journey back home, men and women of the Nilo-Saharan peoples of Mao, Komo, Berta and Gunzo¹³ residing in villages surrounding Ya'a appeared all of a sudden in groups creating a fuss of music and songs. It was now their turn to celebrate the festival at Ya'a. They sang their original *manzumas* in their own language. They danced and sang to the music performed by various musical instruments. These instruments include various lengths of wooden horns, drums, and iron cymbals. The Oromo pilgrims seem to welcome their performance, and some even tape recorded the music and the *manzuma*. One of the rich pilgrims handed out 100 *birr* to the leader of the group, for their performance. The performance continued for about 2 to 3 hours.

At midnight, the last bus directly heading for Addis Ababa, left Ya'a, with about 30 rich pilgrims. After this, there remained only a small number of pilgrims at Ya'a, who left for their homes on foot.

4. Conclusion

Acknowledging that filming has its limitations, clearly dividing the observer and the observed, and necessarily cutting out a fragment of the reality, the act of filming itself have their own merits in conducting research on the pilgrimage ritual. Although the film taker=observer is, at times, prohibited participation in some events or occasions, because the observed choose not to be filmed, this prohibition reveals what the people considers 'should be filmed' and what 'should not'. Both the pilgrims and the residents of Ya'a share a broad image of what the pilgrimage to Ya'a should be like, and scenes not fitting into this image were deliberately excluded. The residents turned down Matsunami's request for filming the gatherings of descendants of *Al-Faki* and rich followers, which apparently was a meeting intended to discuss how the pilgrimage center should be managed. *Hadra* gatherings in which both sexes intermingled were also scenes denied being filmed. On the other hand, the welcoming scene in which an air of 'communitas' prevailed and the scene of communal feasting and the collective prayer on the morning of the festival were scenes recommended to be filmed.

Despite critical perspectives in the discussion of Turner's 'communitas', none attempts to deny that features and conditions glossed by the term 'communitas' exist in some extent in certain phases of the pilgrimage ritual (Eade and Sallnow 2000: 5). At Ya'a, we recognized three types of 'communitas'. First, the atmosphere of 'communitas' created by those coming from the same village, sharing the physical troubles accompanying pilgrimage. This type of 'communitas' has an introverted feature, creating boundaries and distinction with other groups. The second type of 'communitas' is a 'spontaneous' one, following Turner's model. This type of 'communitas' is found in the welcoming scene, in which pilgrims rejoiced unconditionally over the arrival of other pilgrims. The third type of 'communitas' was 'ideological' in Turner's sense of the meaning. This type of 'communitas' was deliberately created by the residents in charge of organizing the festival. The scene of communal feasting was intended to reactivate the memory of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar, who was an indefinite distributor of the sacred.

¹³ Probably a local denomination for the Gumuz.

Therefore we conclude that the filming method, with its limitations and possibilities, highlights the diverse perspectives of the pilgrims and the staff (residents), and the different dimensions of the ‘communitas’ exhibited in the pilgrimage.

References

- Eade, John and Michael J. Sallnow. 2000. *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Ishihara, Minako. 1997. ‘The life history of a Muslim holyman: *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar*.’ *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective*, Kyoto: Shokado booksellers, Vol. 2, pp. 391-402.
- . 2007. ‘Spirit possession and pilgrimage: the formation and configuration of the *Tijjānī* Cult in western Oromoland.’ Unpublished paper prepared for presentation at the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies.
- Jabo Siraje. 1988. ‘Ya’a Pilgrimage Center, Wallagga.’ B.A. Thesis, Addis Ababa University.
- Matsunami, Yasuo. 2006. *Pilgrimage to Ya’a: Feasting the consumers of the sacred*. 26 minutes, color.
- . 2007. ‘Embodiment and distribution of baraka: the social, religious and economic life of the residents of Ya’a, pilgrimage center in western Ethiopia.’ M.A. Thesis, Nanzan University (Unpublished article in Japanese).
- Pankhurst, Alula. 1994. ‘Reflections on Pilgrimages in Ethiopia.’ *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies: Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, Vol. 2, pp. 933-953.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*. Chicago: Aldine.

Spirit Possession and Pilgrimage The Formation and Configuration of the *Tijjānī* Cult in Western Oromoland

Minako Ishihara¹

This article aims to explain how the Tijānīya, despite its reformist mission, has been ‘indigenized’ by the western Oromo in the first half of the 20th century forming a ‘*Tijjānī* Cult’. This Cult developed in a unique way centering on the veneration of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar, and creating a network of centers, related to the life history of *Al-Faki*, scattered in western Oromoland. The configuration of the Cult becomes visible in the performance of pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) and the diffusion of spirit possession.

1. Introduction

The Tijānīya, one of the Islamic mystic orders (*tarīqas*) born in the 19th century Maghrib, is often referred to in the context of being part of the so-called ‘neo-sufistic’ trend², along with other *tarīqas* founded in north and northeast Africa, such as the Sammānīya, Sālīhīya and Sanūsīya (Rahman 1979: 209, Levzion & Voll 1987: 10). The Tijānīya is especially known for having a reformist bent, and is against excessive practices of venerating ‘saints (‘*auliyā*’)³ and the custom of visiting both living ‘saints’ and their tombs or shrines (*ziyāra*). In addition to this, Ahmad at-Tijānī, the founder of the order, is said to have prescribed that his followers should refrain from joining other Sufi orders (Abun-Nasr 1965: 40). Consequently the Tijānīya is regarded as having an exclusive attribute, and the leaders of the order, when they have charismatic authority, are capable of militant mobilization under internal or external pressures (Levzion & Voll 1987: 10).

Despite these characteristics, apparently a product of the political atmosphere in West Africa in the 19th century, the Oromo people of western Ethiopia have accepted the Tijānīya in their own way. This article aims to explain how the Tijānīya, despite its external origin and reformist mission, has been ‘indigenized’ by the western Mačča Oromo in the first half of the 20th century to become a ‘*Tijjānī* Cult’⁴. I differentiate the

¹ Nanzan University, 18 Yamazato-cho, Showa-ku, Nagoya, Aichi Pref., 466-8673, JAPAN. Author’s e-mail address: ishihara@nanzan-u.ac.jp

² The author is well aware of the controversy in the definition of the concept ‘neo-sufism’ (O’Fahey & Radtke 1993).

³ Although the word ‘saint’ has been utilized as a translation for ‘*walī*’ (e.g. Gellner 1969), there is a well-known argument against its use, owing to the difference in character between the Christian saint and the Muslim *walī* (cf. Turner 1974). Some scholars have preferred to use ‘holyman’ instead of ‘saint’ (McHugh 1994, Ishihara 1997). In this article, I use the word ‘saint’ for technical reasons with quotation marks acknowledging the inappropriateness in the strict sense of the word.

⁴ The Oromo people seem to have their own way of pronouncing the name of the order, ‘Tijānīya’ with a stress on ‘jā’. This article is based on research conducted intermittently since 1992. Research was mainly conducted under a series of projects funded by Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Project Leader: Professor Katsuyoshi Fukui of Kyoto University). Research was also funded by the Nanzan University Pache

Tijānīya order and the *Tijjānī* Cult, in order to show that the Tijānīya introduced in the western Oromo society developed in a unique way closely associated with the accomplishments of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar (d. 1953). The *Tijjānī* Cult formed in western Oromo society is, so-to-speak, a ‘regional cult’⁵ centering on the veneration of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar, and creating a network of centers, related to the life history of *Al-Faki*, scattered in western Oromoland (Map1).



Map 1. Location of sites related to the *Tijjānī* Cult and the Cult of *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn.

The regional (or supra-communal) aspect of the *Tijjānī* Cult and the difference in character of the sites contributed to the multi-dimensional formation of the Cult involving Muslims and Christians, the religious elite and the general populace, both men and women. Moreover, the dynamic interplay with other contemporary cults gave the Cult credibility in terms of social and cultural acceptance. These factors resulted in the formation of the Cult, with its configuration becoming visible in the performance of pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) and the diffusion of spirit possession.

However, I readily acknowledge the differentiation between the Tijānīya and the *Tijjānī* Cult to be a technical (or analytical) one, and the Oromo people, including the religious elites who have been granted the *ijāza* (permission to recite the obligatory *wirds* or litanies), do not recognize any distinction between the two. These people, although a minority, form the core members of the Cult, while the majority are easygoing members, who join the *ĉat*-chewing séances (*hadras*)⁶, recite the Tijānīya

Research Subsidy (I-A) for 2005. In Ethiopia, the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of AAU granted administrative support for the research. And I owe many thanks to *Ato* Liku Petros, my research assistant, and his family who supported me in every respect.

⁵ The *Tijjānī* Cult is a ‘regional cult’ in the extent that the Cult has an inclusive characteristics (even open to Christians), with ‘diffuseness and ephemeral, weak, even uncertain centralization’ (Werber 1977: XIV). The concept implies that the cult involves ‘flows of goods, service, information, and people through [a] network of centers...structure and maintain internodal relations’ (Smith 1976 cited in Werber 1977:XI).

⁶ *ĉat* (*Catha edulis* Forsk.) is a plant used mainly for religious purpose among the Muslims in Ethiopia. The leaf has a stimulating effect and prevents the chewer from falling asleep in the midst of religious rites.

litany, the *Salāt al-Fātih*, but, not having accepted the *ijāza*, do not recite the obligatory ones⁷. Therefore, in this sense, the *Tijjānī* Cult is open even to Christians.

2. *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar as qallečča*

Traditionally, the Oromo religion consists in the belief in the high god (*Waaqa*) and supernatural beings (*ayaana*), the latter being ‘a particular manifestation’ of the former, to borrow Bartels’ words (Bartels 1983: 118). The eastern Mačča Oromos recognize certain people, called either *qallu* or *qallečča*⁸, who have the ability to become possessed by particular *ayaanas*. The *Qallu* or *qallečča* is regarded as an intermediary between man and the high god, and the *ayaanas* serve as a channel to express the divine will of the high god (Knutsson 1967: 76).

Regarding the origins of spirit possession, Knutsson states that the phenomenon itself is ‘a new element’ for the Mačča Oromo, possibly due to the decline of the *Gada* system and the consequential cessation of contact with the ritual expert, *Abba Muda*, in southern Ethiopia (Knutsson 1967: 71, 205). Bartels, however, suggests that the possession of the *qallu* or *qallečča* by the *ayaanas* is a pagan reaction to Christianity (Bartels 1983: 123). Because the decline of the *Gada* and the reception of world religions such as Christianity or Islam go hand in hand, these two interpretations represent two sides of the same coin. Whatever the relationship with the *Gada* system may be, the phenomenon of possession by Muslim spirits, namely *rūhānīyas*, emerged in western Oromoland only after the advent of *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar*⁹.

The *Tijjānīya* order was introduced to the western Ethiopia by *Al-Faki Ahmad Umar*, a *Tijjānīya shaykh* (religious leader) from Bornu (Nigeria), in the early 20th century (Ishihara 1997). *Al-Faki*, after a brief stay at Beni-Shangul, set up his residence (respectfully called *masara*, literally meaning royal compound) in the 1920s at Minko (*Säyo wārāda*, Western Wälläga Zone), where he settled for about 25 years. The western Mačča Oromo people, either pagan or recently converted Christians, welcomed *Al-Faki* as a *qallečča*, and called him *Abba Qoričča*, literally meaning ‘medicine man (sorcerer)’. *Al-Faki*, never exhibited ‘spirit possession’ himself, but became well known for being able to gain access to the service of spiritual beings (*rūhānīyas*), similar to the traditional *qallečča*.

He treated the ill not only with herbal medicine but also by magical means and sometimes by communicating with spiritual beings (*jinn*s). The following episode is an anecdote from *Bāb al-Wusūl*, an unpublished biography of *Al-Faki* written by *Hajj Ali Abba Ganda*, one of his close disciples from Jimma.

‘He (*Al-Faki*) showed a lot of *jinn* to the man for two days continuously. The man was a Muslim from Wälläga. The man was affected by leprosy and some part of his body was decaying. Though he knew he could not be cured, he asked *Al-Faki* for any kind of medicine that would cure him. *Al-Faki* told the man to come to a certain place at a certain date with one of his wives. When the man came along

⁷ Those who have received the *ijāzas* are obliged to recite certain litanies after some of their obligatory prayers. Among these include is the most extolled litany unique only to the *Tijjānīya* order, namely, the *Jawharat al-Kamāl* (Abun-Nasr 1965: 52, 187).

⁸ Knutsson differentiates *qallu* and *qallečča*, and defines the former as designating the traditional ‘high priests’, normally restricted to those belonging to a certain kinship category. On the other hand, *qallečča* represents an ‘anti-social’ or ‘anti-traditional’ role, having a low status (Knutsson 1967:66).

⁹ Although the possession by *rūhānīyas* is a new phenomenon in western Ethiopia, Muslim *rūhānīyas* (those with superior status called *auliya*) who serve the public through human mediums are quite well-known in Eastern and Central Ethiopia. According to some of my informants in this region, the Muslim *rūhānīya* corresponds to *wuqabi* in the Christian context.

with his wife to the place as he was told to, a number of *jinns* showed up in front of them. *Al-Faki* asked the *jinns* what the medicine would be to cure the disease. The *jinns* hesitated as if waiting for one another to answer his question. Then *Al-Faki* started to beat the *jinns* until one of them yielded consent. He told *Al-Faki* that there was no remedy for the disease because the man killed a buffalo ridden by a *jinn*. The *jinn* told *Al-Faki* that he will only be cured by taking a perfume called *Haqq al-Bahr*. *Al-Faki* asked who would fetch the perfume for him, and the *jinns* promised that they would bring it in two days. Two days later the man and his wife appeared with a calf. They saw the *jinns* giving the bottle of perfume to *Al-Faki* with their own eyes. They also saw the *jinns* devouring the calf and disappearing as they finished eating it' (*Hajj Ali* 1943: 46).

I have come across a number of oral traditions relating similar episodes of *Al-Faki* treating illnesses caused by *jinns*. And moreover, *Al-Faki* was known to have a powerful Muslim spiritual being (*rūhānīya*) as a close assistant, to whom he was often heard talking to. This Muslim spirit called *Shaykh Idris* (pseud.), was transferred to a little girl named Tayiba (or *Harme Sadiya*, d. 1996) after the death of *Al-Faki*.

3. The emergence of spirit mediums in western Wälläga

During the lifetime of *Al-Faki*, two little girls were brought up in his compound at Minko with his family. One of the two girls was Tayiba. These two girls grew up to become mediums of two *rūhānīyas*, *Shaykh Idris* and *Shaykh Jibril* (pseud.), the former considered to have the superior status.

When *Al-Faki* moved to Kusaye in 1942/43, he had already married off the two girls, now in their early teens, to two Muslim local men. After they both gave birth to children, they lost their husbands. It was on becoming widows and ending their sexual lives that they became fully engaged spirit mediums. *Harme Sadiya*, the medium of *Shaykh Idris*, had her compound built just above the hill where the Minko *masara* of *Al-Faki* is built. *Harme Shafi*, the medium of *Shaykh Jibril* lived in Bondo, a village just across the road of Minko. When I first visited Minko in 1994, I encountered five spirit mediums other than the first two. The remaining five spirit mediums (including one male) all had become fully engaged mediums only after acquiring the blessing of *Shaykh Idris*, the most powerful *rūhānīya* who used to serve *Al-Faki*. When I revisited Minko in 2005, the number of spirit mediums had grown to fifteen (including two men), and there were other novices who had not yet received the blessing of *Shaykh Idris*, whose medium had died in 1996. Since the death of *Harme Sadiya*, people could communicate with *Shaykh Idris* only through 'indirect' means.

Thus, I got the impression that the phenomenon of possession by *rūhānīyas* was gradually expanding. The process of becoming a spirit medium is quite similar to those encountered worldwide. The first sign of possession comes in the form of a recognizable ailment, which may be a stubborn headache or an abnormal sort of illness. After some efforts to find remedies for the disease, the patient is brought to one of the spirit mediums, who summons the spirit possessing the patient, and forces it to identify itself. If the spirit is judged to be harmful and difficult to cope with, it is expelled. However, if the medium reckons the spirit could be of use to the patient and to the public, the medium advises the patient to meet the demands of the spirit. If the patient is a pagan or a Christian, these spirits, usually Muslims, first demand them to convert to Islam¹⁰. After that, the spirit may request the patient to make a sacrifice of a certain type

¹⁰ By definition, a *rūhānīya* is a Muslim, and I have never encountered a medium with a pagan or

of cattle or sheep on a certain date, or demand the patient to hold séances (*hadras*) on certain days of the week. After some months or years, the *rūhānīya* may demand the holding of public séances, which is expressed as ‘opening a séance (*ma’ad baasu*)’¹¹. This step is taken only after the spirit medium and the spirit are granted permission and blessing by the paramount spirit, *Shaykh* Idris, still believed to be working under the orders of *Al-Faki*. On obtaining the blessing (*eebbisu*) from *Shaykh* Idris, the name of the *rūhānīya* is called by the honorific title of *Shaykh*, and gives remedies to those who attend the séance and ask advice from him. The *rūhānīya* and the medium are now eligible to accept money from the clients for the advice given and supplications (*du’ā*) they make. This economical aspect of the *ma’ad* is implied in the dual meaning of the word, referring both to the *hadra* in which *ĉat* is used, as well as to the income which the medium acquires in order to support their daily life.

Broadly speaking, there are two types of spirit possession among the mediums possessed by *rūhānīyas* in this area. On the one hand, there is a widely recognized type which concerns mediums getting possessed with their consciousness completely altered and falling into a state of amnesia (Bourguignon 1973: 12). This type of spirit possession is found universally and most of the possessions I encountered in western Wälläga fit into this type. On the other hand, some mediums remain conscious while being ‘possessed’. For example, in the case of *Harme* Sadiya, when *Shaykh* Idris came to her, she did not fall into the ‘altered state of consciousness (ASC)’ which usually accompanies spirit possession. The voice of *Shaykh* Idris was heard from around her stomach and she not only retained her consciousness but could also speak with other people and with the *Shaykh* himself, simultaneously. To give another example of this exceptional type of ‘possession’, a man called *Abba Imam* (living in Kella, where the late *Abba* Rahmata¹², a loyal disciple of *Al-Faki*, built a mosque and a hut [*khalwa*] for prayer on behalf of *Al-Faki*), communicates with his *rūhānīya*, whose name is *Shaykh* Idris-Ma’wiya without anyone hearing its voice. He listens to and talks with the *rūhānīya* as if he were making a conversation on a telephone.

When the medium opens a séance, he/she is required to keep certain rules (*‘adab*). First of all, the medium is required to purify herself/himself with ablution¹³. Taking an appropriate seat, the medium is usually possessed by the *rūhānīyas* only after having chewed a certain amount of *ĉat*, which is also considered an act of purification¹⁴. Each *rūhānīyas* had their own preferences and some preferred the smell of incense, and others a certain kind of perfume. For instance, *Harme* Yusuf (living in Limmu, ca. 5km from Minko) had a habit of ‘eating’ incense sticks when being possessed, pressing lighted

Christian spirit in Sayo *wāreda*. However, I do not deny the possibility that a spirit medium with a pagan or Christian spirit may exist in this district, because my research in this district was highly selective and restricted to those who belong to the *Tijjānī* Cult.

¹¹ ‘*Ma’ad*’ is a name of the wooden plate, on which meal is served. However, this word is also used to refer to the clean cloth on which *ĉat* is laid. As *ĉat* is regarded as a holy vehicle by which divine grace (*baraka*) is visually distributed and ingested, the cloth on which it is placed should be ‘ritually’ clean (Douglas 1966).

¹² It is interesting to say that the wife of *Abba* Rahmata, namely *Harme* Rahmata is also a spirit medium.

¹³ The mediums are not possessed by the *rūhānīyas* when they are contaminated by blood of any sort (including blood caused by menstruation, homicide and birth). Contamination is also caused by sexual intercourse and attending funerals. These contaminations could be ‘cleansed’ by ablution. Other participants also refrain from attending the séances when they are ‘unclean’ in this sense.

¹⁴ I have heard some of the informants comparing the chewing of *ĉat* at séances with ‘turning on the radio’. As such, *ĉat* is not only used as a means to keep the participant awake, but also as a symbolic substance with which the user is tuned in to communicate with the invisible world in which supernatural beings reside.

incense sticks on her tongue. As the medium chewed her *čat* with her clients, both Muslim and Christian, they recited the Tijānī litany, *Salāt al-Fātih*. The *rūhānīya* which possesses her is called *Shaykh* Uthman. The instant *Shaykh* Uthman came, her voice and behavior turned mannish. The language the *rūhānīya* speaks is *afaan* Oromo (Oromo language) with a mixture of Arabic, which is the habitual way the local learned Muslim Oromo men with honorific titles of *shaykh* and *hajj* speak. 'He' then exchanges greetings with each of 'his' clients attending the séance anew in Arabic, '*as-salām 'alaikum*', '*wa 'alaikum as-salām*', and asks after the clients' family and their health, as if they had not met for a while. I was surprised to hear that *Shaykh* Uthman remembered me ever since I visited 'him' nine years ago. Sometimes *Shaykh* Uthman carries a message from *Shaykh* Idris, whose voice was not heard ever since *Harme* Sadiya died in 1996. However, recently *Shaykh* Idris happened to approach *Harme* Zahra (living in Ripa, just across the road from Limmu), who was already a medium of two other *rūhānīyas*. The *rūhānīya* who usually came first to *Harme* Zahra, after falling unconscious, was *Shaykh* Jibril¹⁵. The second *rūhānīya* to come was *Shaykh* Nuruddin whose voice is heard from around her breast. In addition to these two, *Shaykh* Idris started to 'show up' as if he were sitting next to *Shaykh* Jibril. The medium slightly bends her neck to the right when *Shaykh* Idris speaks, and the voice is very much similar to the one we used to hear from *Harme* Sadiya.

The fact that the number of female mediums exceeds male mediums reminds us of the 'sex war' principle, developed by I. M. Lewis from the case of the *sar* in Northern Somaliland. According to Lewis, women are more prone to spirit possession than men are because they are put under psychological stress, which is caused by the social structure itself (Lewis 1971). However, my interviews with some of the female spirit mediums reveal that the troubles they experienced with their spouses were caused not before the outcome of the diseases caused by spirit possession but only after it had been revealed that the disease was caused by spirit possession. After the causes of their illnesses are identified, they cannot carry on their sexual roles as normal wives if they are to be cured. They are restricted from having sexual intercourse with their husbands and they are prohibited from conducting housekeeping routines, such as cleaning houses, fetching water and preparing meal. If the mediums do not comply with these rules, they will fall ill as before. Moreover, the spirits persistently ask the husbands to cooperate. They are obliged to provide sacrificial animals for the mediums, support their wives in holding weekly séances¹⁶, and comply with the rules of the *hadra*. If the spouse of the spirit medium regards this ordeal as impossible to face, the husband of the spirit medium either divorces her, or marries a second wife, without divorcing the first.

However, these consequences caused by possession do not resolve the question, why women are more prone to be possessed by spirits than men. Although I have not yet noted any clandestine pattern of succession of spirits between kin¹⁷, there is a tendency, when the mother is a medium, for the daughter to be a medium of another spirit, and close sisters may be mediums of different spirits.

Another point that was revealed to me by one of the spirits, when I inquired into this topic, was that the spirits, being pious Muslim *shaykhs*, were contributing to the Islamization of the Oromo society. The Muslim spirits not only obliged those who were

¹⁵ Although the name of the *rūhānīya* is identical to the one possessing *Harme* Shafi, the two *rūhānīyas* are considered to be different.

¹⁶ These include building a hut for *hadrās*, and buying incense (*et'an* and *nadd*) and *čat*.

¹⁷ The succession of spirits I have in mind is the type found in the Mayotte Society (Lambeck 1988).

possessed to become Muslims but also forced them to abide by the obligatory rules of praying and fasting. When the time of the obligatory prayer arrived, while the *hadra* was being held, the mediums and those attending the *hadra* were reminded by the spirit to conduct the prayers. The composition of the hut of *hadra* was arranged to suit this purpose (Fig. 1). Whereas women are required to stand behind men at prayer, the medium, being a *rūhānīya shaykh* and a woman at the same time, faced the *qibla* (the direction of Makka, the north) collaterally with male participants, the two spaces partitioned by a screen. Other women participants take their positions behind the male participants.

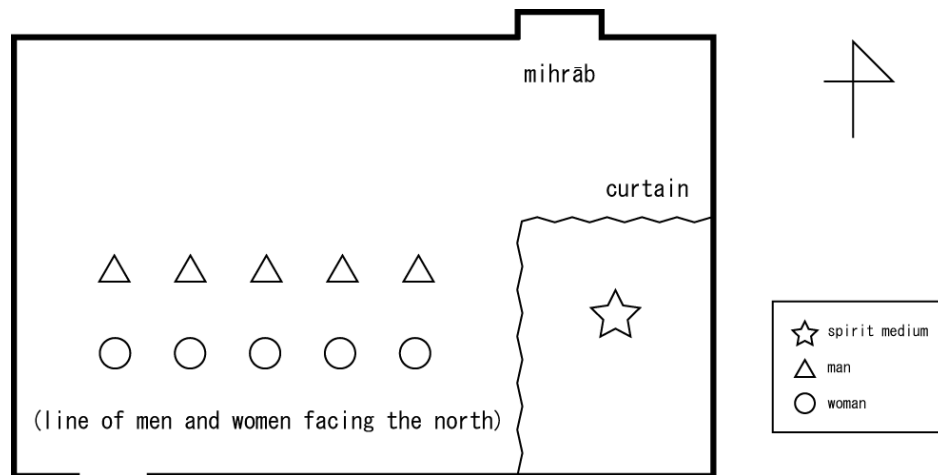


Fig. 1. Standing formation of men and women at prayer

In western Wälläga, the Muslim population has been and still is a minority and Islamization is only undergoing its initial phase (Trimingham 1952). Although nowadays most Muslims in the region respect the rules of restriction against eating meat slaughtered for non-Muslim, and conduct the fasting of Ramadan, they, especially the women, seldom conduct the obligatory prayers. Responding to my question regarding why the *rūhānīyas* tend to choose women as their mediums, one of the spirits told me as follows:

That is because men, when told not to do this or that, are apt to obey, while women frequently disobey and make mistakes. That is why *rūhānīyas* choose women instead of men. We (*rūhānīyas*) guide them (mediums) to the righteous paths and enhance their faiths.

This statement is interesting in the sense that a similar case of *rūhānīya*-possession is reported from East Africa (Kikuchi 1999). An increasing number of people in Mijikenda of Kenya, are becoming Muslims, being possessed by *rūhānīyas*. Spirit possession is being accepted as a pretext for converting to Islam.

Regarding the origins of the *rūhānīyas*, reports from Kenya and Comoro Islands claim they come from the sea. However, in western Wälläga, the only *rūhānīya* claiming to have come 'from the ocean' was the paramount chief of *rūhānīyas*, *Shaykh Idris*. The remaining *rūhānīyas* were converted to Islam by *Al-Faki* and *Shaykh Idris*. According to a *shaykh* who knows much about *Shaykh Idris*, *Al-Faki* said as follows, 'As God gave four *Sahābas* (Companions) to the Prophet Muhammad, he gave *Shaykh Idris* to me. The reason why God sent me *Shaykh Idris* is because Habasha (Ethiopia) is

inhabited by a lot of *qallus* and *jinnis*. Because they (the local people and the spirits) dislike performing the prayers and are hovering about in the darkness, God sent *Shaykh* Idris to me. We (*Al-Faki* and *Shaykh* Idris) whipped them (the local people and spirits) into the righteous path of Islam'. And explaining how these spirits became Muslim, this *shaykh* commented, 'Previously, this region neither had Islam nor Christianity, and *Al-Faki* traveled here and there converting spirits to Islam without being known. These spirits are nevertheless, converts, and are unlike the selected one (like *Shaykh* Idris) that came with *Al-Faki*'.

Rūhānīya possession, with its religious overtones serving as a catalyst between Oromo religion and Islam, is becoming a vehicle of Islamization. And Islamization in this region is proceeding hand in hand with the spread of the *Tijjānī* Cult, which is so-to-speak a veneration cult of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar.

4. The *ziyara* (pilgrimage) to Ya'a

The veneration of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar, as 'saint (*walī*)' is best expressed in the customary practice of pilgrimage (*ziyāra*). The custom of visiting religious leaders considered as 'saints', whether dead or alive, is a common phenomenon found universally in the Muslim world. Although nowadays, criticized as heretical (*bid'a*), by Islam reformists (locally called *Wahabiyas*) in Ethiopia, the pilgrimage custom remains central to the religious lives of Muslims (Ishihara 1996).

During his lifetime, people came to visit *Al-Faki* to ask for his supplication. He was believed to be able to gain access to and distribute divine blessing through supplication. Episodes of the ill being cured and the dead revived were transmitted orally, and people, both Muslim and Christian, flocked to his side. At the same time, *Al-Faki* also became revered as a sophisticated mystic and scholar among the Muslim Oromo public living in the Jimma area, and was given the honorific title, *Sheekota* Dembi (the great religious leader of Dembi Dolo). Although some religious leaders in the Jimma area already had accepted the *Tijjānīya* order¹⁸, they were waiting for a person who could 'renew' and 'revise' their licenses, which could only be attained by a religious leader with a higher grade of spirituality. This was what was expected from *Al-Faki*, who met their needs more than they had expected.

Until the 1920s, Jimma, due to the diplomatic advocacy of *Abba* Jifar, its charismatic leader, was able to resist the attempt of the Ethiopian Empire to incorporate and administer the region. Jimma became a center of Islamic education and became an 'emporium' for Muslim scholars and mystics. Visiting Jimma in the late 1920s, Cerulli reports that in Jimma, *Tijjānīya* was predominant along with *Qādirīya* (Cerulli 1927-28: 96). However, in 1932, when *Abba* Jifar died, the autonomous status of Jimma was abrogated, and the ban on building churches in the region was lifted. Grief over the ongoing situation spread, and many learned Muslim Oromos in and around Jimma left their homeland for Minko (10km from Dembi Dolo), to seek salvation from *Al-Faki*.

Along with the local Oromo residents who converted to Islam for the love of *Al-Faki*, Muslim Oromo immigrants from the Jimma area founded a *Tijjānī* community centering in Minko (*Säyo wārāda*), where his *masara* still exists. The same kind of *masara* was built on behalf of *Al-Faki* wherever he stayed, though some have been abandoned (e.g. the *masara* built in the hinterland of Affallo, Gera *wārāda*). Before and after his death

¹⁸ The *Tijjānīya* was first introduced to the Jimma area in the beginning of the 20th century. According to my research, it was *Hajj* Mahmūd Abūbakr (*alias Sheekota* Tijje, d.1911/12) who was first to introduce the order to the area, followed by *Hajj* Yūsuf (*alias Sheekota* Chekorsa, d. 1937/38).

at Ya'a (Tonga *wäräda*, Beni Shangul & Gumuz Regional State) in 1953, those Muslims determined to live at the side of *Al-Faki*, gathered and formed a small community around his mausoleum. This was the foundation of Ya'a, referred to as 'the paradise in the wilderness (*yäbarahaw gännät*)' (Eshetu 1978), a major pilgrimage center of the *Tijjānī* Cult.

The traditional Oromo custom of visiting the holy shrine every eight years to have the *Abba Muda* conduct the anointment ceremony for them under the *Gada* system, had already been transfigured into a Muslim practice of visiting (*ziyāra*) mausoleums and 'saints' (dead or alive) in the syncretic customs of the veneration of the 13th century *walī*, *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn, or *Sheekana Huseen* (Asmarom 1973: 9-10). One of the branches of the descendants of *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn settled in Gomma (a district adjacent to Jimma)¹⁹, and people venerating the *Shaykh* (enthusiastic venerated conventionally called *Garība*) were abundant in the area. They made one of the main streams of people making pilgrimage to Anajina (the location of the mausoleum of the *Shaykh*) on Muslim holidays (Map 1).

It is clear that the cult of *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn was reflected in the *Tijjānī* Cult. Several aspects of the *Tijjānī* pilgrimage to Ya'a were modeled on the pilgrimage to Anajina. A village was built around the mausoleum at Ya'a just like the one founded in *Dirre* *Shaykh* Husayn (Anajina). The residents of the mausoleum village served as guardians of the mausoleum and caretakers of pilgrims. Enthusiastic venerated of *Al-Faki* were called *Sagūra*, instead of *Garība*. The emblems the pilgrims to Ya'a carried was a bamboo stick with remnants of branches sticking out alternatively on both sides, whereas in the case of the *Shaykh* Husayn cult, the *Garības* carry Y-shaped sticks as emblem for making pilgrimage.

Thus, these two mausoleums, Anajina and Ya'a, are the two main pilgrimage centers the Muslim Oromos in the Jimma Zone head for on Muslim holidays. Both are located on the (eastern and western) periphery of Oromoland, in an out-of-the-way place. Anajina is on the borderland of Oromo and Somali, whereas Ya'a is located near the Sudan border, surrounded by the Nilo-Saharan peoples of Fadhasi, Mao and Bertha. Those who cannot afford to make the pilgrimage customarily visit the mausoleums of their descendants located in the Jimma area.

Most of the descendants of *Al-Faki* live in the Jimma area, where they, both men and women, are extended considerable respect, called by the honorific title, *Sayyid* and *Gifti*. Some, who are believed to have inherited the spiritual power of *Al-Faki*, have mausoleums built after their deaths. The most venerated among the descendants of *Al-Faki* is his eldest son, *Sayyid* Hassan, whose mausoleum is located at Sadi (Gomma *wäräda*, near the border to Gera). The other locale, which many people visit to celebrate Muslim holidays, is Obba (Gera *wäräda*, near the border to Kafa area), where the last living son of *Al-Faki*, *Sayyid* Abdulkarīm still lives. On the other hand, those who venerate *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn visit the mausoleum of Waruko (Gomma *wäräda*). People visit these places especially if they have vowed to do so or have a vow to fulfill. They make votive offerings (*nazri*) and spend a night or two in the vicinity of the mausoleum (or the residence, if the *walī* is still alive), attending *hadrās* and making supplications.

Although appearing to have similar features, having a village established around the mausoleum, inhabited by residents responsible for the maintenance of the mausoleum, the interactions the residents have with the pilgrims at Ya'a contrast sharply with those

¹⁹ The Awalini, the hereditary clan of the king (*moti*) of Gomma, is believed to be one of the descendant branches of *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn.

at Anajina. At Ya'a every pilgrim is considered as guests seeking *baraka* (divine grace) through the intercession of *Al-Faki* and are served with a meal, which is never the case with Anajina. The pilgrims are served with *injāra* and meat stew, regarded as '*dawwa* (medicine)'. This meal is normally served once on the eve of the Muslim holidays (*Arafa*, *Mi'rāj*, and *Mawlid an-Nabī*). Thus, throughout the year, the residents of Ya'a, are obliged not only to engage in agriculture for subsistence, but also to subject themselves to various kinds of labor which contributes to the feasting rituals of the pilgrims²⁰. As Ya'a is considered the Ethiopian center of both the Tijānīya and the *Tijjānī* Cult, the rituals required for the Tijānīya are devotedly performed by those residents who hold the qualifications.

5. Conclusion

This article is an attempt to describe the historical formation and geographical configuration of the *Tijjānī* Cult, which developed in Western Oromoland in the 20th century. I have attempted to show the Cult as having three dimensions. First, the Cult has a center in western Wällāga, where *Al-Faki* first settled. Here, the Muslim population was a minority, and *Al-Faki* was accepted as a sorcerer, or healer by the pagan or Christian Oromos. Although during his lifetime a number of Muslim communities were formed around his residence, Islamization was still in its initial phase when he left the area. After his death, a number of spirit mediums claiming to have spiritual relationships with *Al-Faki* and his spiritual partner *Shaykh* Idris emerged, succeeding *Al-Faki*'s role as healer. Those being possessed by Muslim spirits are increasing, contributing to the expansion of Islam, the other facet of *Al-Faki*'s contribution in the area.

The second center of the Cult is the Jimma area, where most of the descendants of *Al-Faki* chose to reside after *Al-Faki* passed away. The Oromo population of the Jimma area is known to have Islamized in the 19th century and regarded *Al-Faki* as a reverential Muslim scholar and mystic. The Muslim population in the Jimma area believe the descendants, both male and female, have inherited some of the divine grace of *Al-Faki*, and are called by the honorific title, *Sayyid* and *Gifti*. Some, though not all, of the descendants, have mausoleums built after their deaths, and have become local centers of the *Tijjānī* Cult.

The third center of the *Tijjānī* Cult is Ya'a, where a village inhabited by migrant members of the Cult is built around the mausoleum of *Al-Faki*. Although the residents of Ya'a are invariably Muslim Oromo from Jimma, Illubabor or Western Wällāga, pilgrimage to Ya'a is open to anyone, including Christians, who believe in the intercessory power of *Al-Faki* and have votive offerings to make. The pilgrimage center and symbolic paraphernalia attached to the pilgrimage ritual, conceivably, is modeled on the syncretic cult of the 13th century *walī*, *Shaykh* Nūr Husayn, with significant features distinctive from the cult in the interaction between the residents of the mausoleum village and the pilgrims. This divergence is caused from the individual tendency of *Al-Faki*, renowned for his generosity, itself a gift from God.

In other words, the topography of the *Tijjānī* Cult itself consists of the deeds and contributions of *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar himself. *Al-Faki* Ahmad Umar, though physically invisible, becomes 'visible' in the Cult itself, his role as healer, scholar, mystic, and generous giver, being passed on to the Cult members themselves.

²⁰ Yasuo Matsunami, a graduate student of Anthropology at Nanzan University, made an ethnographic film, entitled, 'Pilgrimage to Ya'a' based on his fieldwork at Ya'a, conducted in 2006.

References

- Abun-Nasr, Jamil M. 1965. *The Tijaniyya: a Sufi Order in the Modern World*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Asmarom Legesse. 1973. *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bartles, Lambert. 1983. *Oromo Religion: Myths and Rites of the Western Oromo of Ethiopia-An Attempt to Understand*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Bourguignon, Erika. 1973. 'Introduction: A Framework for the Comparative Study of Altered States of Consciousness' in E. Bourguignon (ed), *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press. pp. 3-35.
- Cerulli, Enrico. 1927-28. *Etiopia Occidentale*. Roma: Sindacato Italiano Arti Grafiche.
- Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Eshetu Dibaba. 1978. 'Ya'a Masara' unpublished report (type-written in Amharic).
- Hajj Ali Abba Ganda. 1943. *Bāb al-Wusūl*. unpublished article (handwritten in Arabic).
- Ishihara, Minako. 1996. 'Textual Analysis of a Poetic Verse in a Muslim Oromo Society in Jimma Area, Southwestern Ethiopia'. in Shun Sato & Eisei Kurimoto (eds.), *Essays in Northeast African Studies* (Senri Ethnological Studies 43), Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- 1997. 'The life history of a Muslim holyman: Al-Faki Ahmad Umar'. Fukui, Katsuyoshi, Eisei Kurimoto & Masayoshi Shigeta (eds.), *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective (Proceedings of the 13th International Conference for Ethiopian Studies)*, Kyoto: Shokado, Vol. 2, pp.391-402.
- Kikuchi, Shigeo. 1999. 'Slow Islamization in the hinterland of the Kenya coast: socio-cultural conditions for conversion'. *The Japanese Journal of Ethnology* (*Minzokugaku-Kenkyu*), Vol.64(3), pp.273-294 (in Japanese).
- Knutsson, Karl E. 1967. *Authority and Change, a Study of the Kallu Institution among the Macha Galla of Ethiopia*. Göteborg: Etnografiska Museet.
- Lambeck, Michel. 1988. 'Spirit possession/ spirit succession; aspects of social continuity among Malagasy speakers in Mayotte'. *American Ethnologists*, Vol.15(4), pp. 710-31.
- Lewis, Ioan, M. 1971. *Ecstatic Religion*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- Levtzion, Nehemiah & J. O. Voll. (eds.). 1987. *Eighteenth-Century Renewal and Reform in Islam*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- McHugh, Neil. 1994. *Holymen of the Blue Nile: The Making of an Arab-Islamic Community in the Nilotic Sudan, 1500-1850*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- O'Fahey, R.S. & B. Radtke. 1993. 'Neo-Sufism Reconsidered'. *Der Islam*, Vol.70(1), pp. 52-87.
- Rahman, Fazlur. 1979. *Islam* (2nd Edition). Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Smith, C. A. (ed). 1976. *Regional Analysis, Vol.II: Social Systems*. New York: Academic Press.
- Trimingham, J. Spencer. 1952. *Islam in Ethiopia*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Turner, Bryan S. 1974. *Weber and Islam*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Werbner, Richard. 1977. 'Introduction' in Werbner, R. (ed), *Regional Cults*. New York: Academic Press, pp.IX-XXXVII.

The Woman in the Creation Story According to the *Andämta* Commentary of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church

Mersha Alehegne¹

Gender seems to be a hot topic these days. It's something everyone has an opinion on; and there are many opinions. Scrutinising the opinions will lead to identifying different causes such as political, economical, social, etc. Being influenced by the discourses that have arisen out of other academic fields such as philosophy, sociology, linguistic, etc., religious institutions and the field of religious studies continue to be transformed by new modes of gender discourse. However, this looks to be an unlikely occurrence in the wider theological discussions and arguments of the ancient churches like the Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahido Church which is the Apostolic and has kept the Faith, Order and Tradition of the earlier Church Fathers unchanged until this day. Therefore, the objective of this paper is to present the Amharic commentary text and its translation of the Biblical narration of the creation story of woman.

The oldest religious nations that have Holy Scriptures (Bible, Tora, Koran, etc.) developed their own methods of commentary that help discover the truths and values of their scriptures. In a similar manner, Ethiopia, a nation whose culture has been influenced by the Bible over many centuries, has developed and established its own tradition of the interpretation of and commenting upon the Biblical (and Patristic) texts. This is in line with the pattern of other exegetical traditions of other Christian cultures in general (and, as it is supposed, the Antioch exegesis tradition in particular). This tradition, known as *Andämta*, is one of the unique and most valuable legacies of the ancient Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahido Church (EOTC) and the entire country of Ethiopia.

Study of the *Andämta*-commentary method is the highest stage in the traditional system of education of the EOTC (consisting, from the lower to higher, of *Nəbab Bet* “the house of reading”, *Zema Bet* “the house of Church music”, *Qəne Bet* “the house of religious poetry” and *Mätshaf Bet* “the house of books”). As Fridrich Heyer, a German Ethiopianist, puts it, “here the foundation for the practice of the Orthodox faith is set forth, the education of monks prescribed, the theology of the fathers of the church firmly standardized, the calendar fixed”².

The *Andämta* Commentary can be defined as a point of departure for an understanding and interpretation of different meanings or hidden secrets in biblical, patristic and liturgical books, written in Ge'ez, the ancient language of the country. It deals, thus, with the detailed and profound study, analysis and interpretation of the sacred texts. It is also an interpretational method in Amharic (which since the 18th cent. at least has increasingly become the state language of Ethiopia) that allows the teacher to interpret a

¹ Hamburg University, Doctoral Candidate at the Asia Africa Institute, Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 (Ost), D-20146 Hamburg, Germany. Email: mershing@yahoo.com.

² Heyer (1960:140).

verse or phrase of a sacred text with multiple choices of possible explanations or comments. It is a means of providing room to the teacher to explain his opinions of agreement or disagreement with the usage of words, ideas or concepts in the context of a given text, while producing a straightforward explanation of the text, supported by references from other Biblical books and reputable patristic works of a recognized authority.

This study is designed to present the Amharic commentary text on the creation story of woman and its translation in which an effort has been made to include some additional and different explanations found in different related scriptures.

Content of the Text

The Amharic commentary material which explains the position of woman in the creation story is taken from the second chapter of the commentary of the Book of Genesis³. When we open our Bible to Genesis Chapter 2, and look at Verses 4 to 25, we find the Chapter on the original history of man. Reading the given chapter, we find the verse which is a launching point for the discussion of the details of the position of woman in the creation and her original history in the Garden.

The creation of woman is described in ch. 2:18-24:

[19] And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. [19] And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. [20] And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. [21] And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; [22] And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. [23] And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. [24] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Looking closely at the Amharic commentary of these verses which form the subject of this paper, one can pick some concepts which convey the teachings of the EOTC about why, when, how and from where God created woman. Some of the implication are discussed as follows:

An answer for his [Adam's] question: Before God provided Adam with Eve, He assigned him to name all creatures which were created in the Garden. Adam accomplished his assignment but, observing that every creature was a couple male and female, he felt sad and desperately asked why God created him alone. *On Sunday, He [God] brought Adam the cattle and the beasts that he named them; on Monday and Tuesday, He brought him the fowl that he named them; on Wednesday, He brought him creatures of the earth that he named them; and on Thursday, He brought him creatures of the sea that he named them. When Adam observed that God created all [of these*

³ The present writer is preparing a critical edition of the Amharic commentary of the Book of Genesis for his doctoral degree at the University of Hamburg, Germany under the auspices of Prof. Dr. Dr. Siegbert Uhlig. Hence, he collected eight manuscripts of the same book which has different variants and readings. The text which is presented in this paper are mostly taken from one of the texts which is described as Text C (EMML 2012) in the study.

creatures] male and female, he felt sad wondering how he was created alone unlike the other creatures whom he called.

The *Andämta* commentary answers why God kept Adam alone while He created others male and female. The reason, according to the commentary tradition, not that God was unwilling to create a female for Adam; but He wanted to teach an important lesson to let Adam feel her importance for his life. Here it goes like this: *It was not for the fact that the Holy Trinity were unwilling to create Eve. But it was to let him find her with excitement and eagerness. Andäm, to let him find her with sadness and melancholy as something found with sadness and grief is useful and productive. Andäm, when he face some bad experiences with her, he could be frightened saying They created her for me without my request. [But now] he will be tolerant at the time of quarrel saying that it was by my request why They created her for me.*

Secondary Status: the traditional interpretation of the EOTC emphasizes Eve's secondary status in relation to Adam in the creation story. According to the *andämta* commentary tradition, Eve was created 8 days after Adam⁴: *after these, God created Eve for Adam after 8 days Adam was created. Adam was created in the morning and Eve was created at the 3rd hour of the 8th day.*

State of slumber: it is told in the Holy Bible that God created Adam He after caused him to sleep⁵. But according to the Ethiopian commentary tradition, Adam was not in a deep sleep when Eve was taken out of him. He was [ማዕከል ነቂህ ወንዋጭ] in between sleeping and awakening. As to the commentary tradition, God had the reason to let Adam be in such a situation: *the Holy Trinity created Eve for Adam when he [Adam] was in between sleeping and awakening; when he was neither conscious nor asleep. Had they created her when he was completely conscious, he could have felt the pain as deed of the Holy Trinity are not a phantom. And if he was completely asleep, he would have taken her as a phantom. Andäm, had They created her when he was more conscious, he would kept away himself from any sexual intercourse considering her as his sister. And had They created her when he was completely asleep, he would consider her as an outsider. Andäm, to explain the prophecy and the symbolism behind. The prophecy is what it says I am asleep and alive in my consciousness; and the symbolism is as Adam caused Eve being in between asleep and awake, the LORD caused the second Eve, baptism, being alive in His Divinity and dead in his humanity.*

left side [of Adam]: the Holy Bible inform us that God created Eve from Adam's rib without identifying which side the rib was taken from⁶. But the *andämta* commentary tradition specifies that it is from one of his left ribs though it also claims, by extension, the right ribs to explain the concept more: *If it is asked whether they created her from his [Adam's] left or right side, it was from his left side. For this to be true, left is weak. Likewise, women are weak; left is crooked. Likewise, women are crooked for good deeds. Left is calm. Likewise, women are calm for their wishes (for what they said); Andäm, there is much blood on the left [side of human beings]. Likewise, women bleed much. Andäm, They created her from his right side. For this to be true, right is powerful. Likewise, women are powerful to accomplish their wishes. Andäm, right is*

⁴ This secondary status of woman in creation order goes further to the same order they obtained when they entered into heaven, the planned (by God) habitat of the two. According to the commentary tradition, Adam entered into heaven 40 days after he was created and 80 days for Eve. (com. Gen. 2v.8). This is the justification for the baptismal rite of the church by which a baby boy is baptised at the 40th day after his birth while the 80th day for a baby girl.

⁵ Gen. 2v.21

⁶ *ibid.*

fast. Likewise, women are fast to accomplish their wishes; Andām, right is honest. Likewise, women are honest for what they like to do. Andām, as Adam gave forth the first Eve from his right side, the LORD gave forth the second Eve, baptism from his right side.

Ribs: Eve was made from one of Adam's ribs. According to the commentary tradition, God had a clear reason to create her from one of the ribs of Adam: *If it is asked why didn't He create her from above [Adam's] head or from below [Adam's] foot, had He created her from his head, she could be more arrogant as women are so; and had He created her from his foot, she could be more lowly as they are so. He created her from the middle of [Adam's] body to let her live below her husband and above the family. Andām, the rib is covered by cloth so that woman is the secret wealth for her husband as the Apostle says: the woman is the glory of her husband. Does not even nature itself teach you?*

The Text

20 ወሰመዮሙ አዳም ለከላሉ በበአስማቲሆሙ ለእንስሳ ወለከላሉ አዕዋፈ ሰማይ ወለከላሉ አራዊት ገዳም

አዳምም ለሁሉ ስም ስም አወጣላቸው፤ ለእንስሳትም ለአዕዋፍም ለአራዊቶች ሁሉ ስም አወጣላቸው። ላም በሬ ርግብ ዋናስ ዝሆን አንበሳ ነምር ብሎ።

ወለአዳምስ ኢተረክበ ረድኤቱ ዘከማሁ

ለአዳም ግን እንደሱ ያለ ረዳት አጋዥ አልተኘለትም ነበር። ሐተታ፤ ጌታ ዓርብ በነግህ አዳምን ፈጥሮ ቅዳሜን መፍጠሩን ተወ። ዕሁድ እንስሳትን አራዊትን አመጣለት። ስም አወጣላቸው። ሰኞና ማክሰኞ አዕዋፍን አመጣለት። ስም አወጣላቸው። ረቡዕ በየብስ የተፈጠሩትን ፍጥረታት አመጣለት። ስም አወጣላቸው። ሐሙስ በባሕር የተፈጠሩትን ፍጥረታት አመጣለት። ስም አወጣላቸው። ጌታ ሁሉንም አንስትና ተባዕት አድርጎ ፈጥሯቸው ነበርና እነዚህ ሁሉ ሁለት ሁለት ሆነው ተፈጥረው አይቶ አዳም ከቶ ከኔ በቀር ሌላ አንድ ሆኖ የተፈጠረ ፍጥረት የለምን ብሎ አዘነ። አሁን ለሥላሴ የሔዋን መፈጠር ፈቃዳቸው ሳይኾን ቀርቶ አይደለም፤ ሽቶ ያግኛት ብለው ነው እንጂ፤ እንዲህ ማለቱ መሻቱ ነውና። አንድም አጭቶ ያግኛት ብለው ነው እንጂ፤ እንዲህ ማለቱ ማጨቱ ነውና። አንድም አዝኖ ተክዞ ያግኛት ብለው ነው እንጂ፤ አዝኖ ተክዞ ያገኘት ነገር ይረባል ይጠቅማልና። አንድም መከራ ባገኘው ጊዜ ፍጠራልኝ ሳልላቸው ፈጥረውልኝ ብሎ መከራውን በተሰቀቀው ነበርና። ምነዋ ቢኾን ፍጠራልኝ ብያቸው ፈጥረውልኝ የለምን ብለው ታግሦ መከራውን እንዲቀበለው ነው። ከዚህ በኋላ ኢኮነ ሠናይ ለእንሰ እመሕያው ይንበር ባሕቲቱ አላ ንግበር ሎቱ ቢጸ ዘትረድኦ አለ።

21 ወአምጽአ እግዚአብሔር ድቃስ ላዕለ አዳም ወኖመ

እግዚአብሔር በአዳም እንቅልፍን አመጣበት ተኛ። ከዚህ በኋላ ሥላሴ አዳም በተፈጠረ በስምንተኛው ቀን ሔዋንን ፈጠራለት። አዳም በነግህ ተፈጥሯል። ሔዋንም በስምንተኛው ቀን በሦስተኛው ሰዓት ተፈጥራለች። ሐተታ፤ ሥላሴ አዳም ተኝቶ ሳለ ሔዋንን ስለምን ፈጠሯት ቢሉ ተዋሕዶአቸው በመኝታ ነውና፤ አንድም ሔዋንን ማእከለ ነቂህ ወንዋም ሳለ ፈጥረውለታል። እጅግም ሳይሰማ እጅግም ሳይተኛ። እጅግም እየሰማ ፈጥረውለት ቢኾን የሥላሴ ሥራቸው ምትሐት አይደለምና ባመመው ነበር። እጅግም ሳይሰማ ፈጥረውለት ቢኾን ምትሐት ባደረጋት ነበርና። አንድም እጅግም እየሰማ ፈጥረውለት ቢኾን እኅቴ ናት ብሎ ከግብር በተከላከላት ነበር። እጅግም ሳይሰማ ፈጥረውለት ቢኾን ባዕድ ባደረጋት ነበርና። ይህስ አይደለም ለሥላሴ እጅግም እየሰማ ፈጥረውለት እኅቴ ናት ብሎ ከግብር እንዳይከለክል እጅግም ሳይሰማ ፈጥረውለት ባዕድ እንዳያደርጋት ማድረግ ይቻላቸዋል ብሎ፤ ትንቢቱን ምሳሌውን ለመግለጽ ነው። ትንቢቱ አኑ ንውም ወልብዮ ንቅሕት ያለው ነው። ምሳሌው አዳም ማዕከለ ነቂህ ወንዋም ሳለ ሔዋንን ከኅኑ

እንዳስገኘ ጌታም ሕያው በመለኮቱ ምውት በትስብእቱ ኸኖ ዳግሚት ሔዋን ጥምቀትን የማስገኘቱ ምሳሌ ነው። የፈጠራትስ ከቀኝ ጎኑ ነውን ወይስ ከግራ ጎኑ ቢሉ ከግራ ጎኑ ፈጥረውለታል። ይህም ይታወቅ ዘንድ ግራ ደካማ ነው፤ ሴቶችም ደካሞች ናቸውና። ግራ ጠማማ ነው፤ ሴቶችም ለበጎ ነገር ጠማሞች ናቸው። ግራ ጎዱዕ ነው፤ ሴቶችም ላላሉት ነገር ጎዱዕት ናቸውና። አንድም ግራ ደም ይበዛበታል፤ ሴቶችም ደም ይበዛባቸዋል። አንድም በግራ የውኃ ባሕርይ ይጸናል፤ በሴቶችም የውኃ ባሕርይ ይጸናባቸዋል። አንድም ከቀኝ ጎኑ ፈጥረውለታል። ይህም ይታወቅ ዘንድ ቀኝ ኃይል ነው። ሴቶችም ላሉት ነገር ኃይላን ናቸው። ቀኝ ፈጣን ነው፤ ሴቶችም ለተራድኦ ፈጣኖች ናቸውና። ቀኝ ቀና ነው፤ ሴቶች ላሉት ነገር ቀናዎች ናቸውና። አንድም ለምሳሌ አዳም ከቀኝ ጎኑ ቀዳሚት ሔዋንን እንዳስገኘ ጌታም ከቀኝ ጎኑ ዳግሚት ሔዋን ጥምቀትን አስገኝቷልና። ያውስ ቢኾን ከፍ ብሎ ከራስ ዝቅ ብሎ ከእግር ያልፈጠሯት ከመካከል ከጎን ላይ የፈጠሯት ስለምንድን ነው ቢሉ ከፍ ብሎ ከራስ ፈጥረዋት ቢኾን ሴቶች ትዕቢተኞች ናቸውና ፈጽመው በታበዩ ነበር፤ ዝቅ ብሎ ከእግር ላይ ፈጥረዋት ቢኾን ሴቶች ወራዶች ናቸውና ፈጽመው በተዋረዱ ነበር። ከመካከል መፍጠሩ ከባለቤት በላይ ከቤተሰብ በታች ሁነሽ ኑሪ ሲላት ነው። አንድም ጎን በልብስ በድግ ይሠውራል። ሴትም ለባሏ ሥውር ገንዘቡ ናትና። ይህንንም ሐዋርያው ወብእሲትኒ ክብሩ ለምታ ይእቲ። ወፍጥረታኒ ኢየሱስ ክሪስቶስ ብሎ ወስዶታል⁷። ሊቁም ይህንን አስማምቶ ተርጉሞታል⁸። ከአዳም ጎን አንድ ዐጽም በነሳ ጊዜ የሰውነት ተፈጥሮ ሕፃን እንዳላገኘው እመቤታችንም ጌታ ከሥጋዋ ሥጋ ከነፍሷ ነፍስ ነስቶ ሰው በኾነ ጊዜ በማኅተመ ድንግልናዋ ሕፃን ያለመገኘቱ ምሳሌ ነው። ወበከመ ኢሐዎ ለአዳም እም ሕንፃ ሥጋሁ ዘቀዲሙ በእንተ ዘተነቅለ ዐፅመ ገቦሁ ከማሁ ኢሐዐ ማኅተመ ድንግልናሃ ለማርያም አመ ወለደቶ ለአበ አዳም በሥጋ እንዲል። ሔዋን ዘርዓ ቱላሔ ሳይኖርባት ከአዳም በመገኘቷ የሰውነት ተፈጥሮ ሕፃን እንዳልተገኘባት እንዳልተለወጠች ጌታም ከእመቤታችን ሰው በኾነ ጊዜ ዘርዓ ቱላሔ /ዘርዓ ሙላድ/ ስለሌለበት በባሕርዩ ትስብእቱ ሕፃን ያለመኖሩ ምሳሌ ነው። ኢሐዎ ፍና ትስብእት በእንተ ዘአልቦቱ አብ ለዘርዐ ሙላድ አላ ፍጹመ ተሰብዓ ዘእምባሕቲታ ድንግል በከመ ኢሐዓ ለሔዋን ጠባይዐ አንስት በእንተ ዘአልባቲ እም አመ ተነድቀት እም ዐፅመ ገቦሁ ለአዳም እንዲል። አዳም ሔዋንን ከጎኑ ባስገኘ ጊዜ ሕማም እንዳልተሰማው ቅድስት ድንግልም ጌታን በድንግልና ባስገኘች ጊዜ ሕማመ ወሊድ በባሕርይዋ ያለመሰማቱ ምሳሌ ነው። ወበከመ ኢየሱስ ክሪስቶስ ለአዳም ሶብ ተነቅለ ዐፅመ ገቦሁ ከማሁ ኢረከባ ሕማመ ወሊድ ለእመ አምላክ ገሊላዊት እንዲል። ይህንንም ሊቁ ከመ በሱታፌ መንክር ይትአወቅ ዝንቱ አንድ ክብር እንተ ፍጥረት ብሎ ወስዶታል። አዳም ሔዋንን እንዳስገኘ እመቤታችንም ጌታን ያለወንድ ያላስገኘች ቢኾን ሴቶች ከወንዶች እንደ ተዋረዱ በቀሩ ነበርና ያለ ወንድ በማስገኘቷ ሴቶች ከወንዶች የመተካከላቸው ምሳሌ ነው።

ወነሥአ እግዚአብሔር አሐተ እም ዐጽመ ገቦሁ ወመልአ ሥጋ መካና

ከጎኑ አንድ ዐጽም ነቀለ አወጣ። አንድ ዐጽም የነሣባትን የአዳምን ጎድንም ሥጋ መላት። አንድም ከጎኑ የነቀላትን ያወጣትን የነሣትን የወሰዳትን ዐጽም ሥጋ መላት።

- 22 ወነደቃ እግዚአብሔር ለይእቲ ዐጽመ ገቦ እንተ ነሥአ እምአዳም

እግዚአብሔር ከአዳም ጎን የነቀላትን ያወጣትን የነሣትን የወሰዳትን ዐጽም ሴት አድርጎ ዓይን ገሮ እጅ እግር አፍ አፍንጫ አውጥቶ ቀረጸት።

ወረሲያ ብእሲቶ

የምትዋሐዳው አደረጋት። ብእሲት ማለት ስትፍት ብርሃት ማለት ነውና። እሷ ግን አትብሉ ያላትን ዕፅ በልታ ስትፍት የነበረች ፍልጥ ብርሃት የነበረች ጽልምት ኾናለችና።

ወአምጽአ ኀበ አዳም

ወደ አዳም አመጣት አቀረባት።

- 23 ወይቤ አዳም ሶቤሃ ዛቲ ይእቲ ዓጽመ እም ዓጽምየ ወሥጋ እምሥጋየ ለትኩነኒ ብእሲትየ

⁷ 1Cor. 11 v. 7 – 14.

⁸ the commentary cited following is taken from the commentary of the Book of the Liturgy of Cyril.

ይህች የአጥንቴ ፍላጭ የሥጋዬ ቁራጭ ናት አለ። ይህች ልትወሐደኝ ሚስት ልትኾነኝ ይገባል። እስመ እምታ ወጽአት ይእቲ። እስመ እምኔህ ሲል ነው። ከኔ ከባሏ ተገኝታለችና። አንድም ለትኩን ብእሲተ ለትሰመይ ብእሲተ ይላል አብነት። ሴት ትባል አለ። ብእሲት ማለት ከወንድ የተከፈለች የተገኘች ማለት ነውና። እስመ እምነ ብእሲ ወጽአት ይእቲ ይላል። ከወንድ ተከፍላለች ተገኝታለችና።

24 ወበእንተዝ የጎድግ ብእሲ አባሁ ወእም ወይተልዋ ለብእሲቱ

ሔዋን ከአዳም ጎን ስለተገኘች ወንድ አባት እናቱን ትቶ ምሽቱን ተከትሎ ይሄዳል። ቆላ ብትወርድ ቆላ ደጋ ብትወጣ ደጋ ይወጣል።

ወይከውኑ ክልሔሆሙ አሐደ ሥጋ

ሁለቱም አንድ አካል ይሆናሉ። አንድ ልብስ በመልበስ አንድ ክብር በመውረስ። አንድም ፈቃደ ሥጋ ቢነሳበት የጎድግ እም ወይእቲኒ ተጎድግ አባቶ። ወንዱ በናቴ ላድርገው አይልም። ሴቲቱም በአባቴ ላድርገው አትልም። በግብር ከእሷ ጋር አንድ አካል ይሆናሉ። ወይከውኑ ክልሔሆሙ አሐደ ሥጋ። ሁለቱ አንድ አካል ይሆናሉ አለ በግብር። ሐተታ ወንድ ቢወለድ ያንተ ነው ሴት ብትወለድ ያንቺ ናት አይባባሉምና። አንድም እሱን ቢመስል የአንተ ነው እሷን ቢመስል የአንቺ ነው አይባባሉምና። አንድም ሁለት ሁነው አንድ ልጅ ያስገኛሉና። አንድም ከናት ደም ካባት ዘር ተከፍሎ አንድ ሰው ሁኖ ይወለዳልና።

25 ወሀለዉ አዳም ወብእሲቱ ዕራቃኒሆሙ ወኢየትኃፈሩ

አዳምና ሚስቱ ከዚህ ዓለም ልብስ ዕራቁታቸውን ሳሉ አይተፋፈሩም ነበር። ሐተታ ብርሃን ለብሰው ነበርና። ብርሃንም ይገልጻል እንጂ ይሠውራልን ቢሉ እርሱ ሠውር ካለው ይሠውራልና። አንድም እንደ ሕፃን አይተፋፈሩም ነበር። ሰባቱ ዓመት እስኪፈጸም ከልብስ ኃጢአት እራቁታቸውን ነበሩና። በልብስ ኃጢአት አይተፋፈሩም ነበር።

Translation⁹

20. *And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field;*

Adam named all the cattle, the fowl and the beasts calling cow, ox, pigeon, elephant, lion, tiger.

21. *but for Adam there was not found a help- mate for him*

but an assistant who was like him¹⁰ was not found for Adam. *Hatäta*. God created Adam on Friday and gave up creation on Saturday. On Sunday, He [God] brought Adam the cattle and the beasts and he named them; on Monday and Tuesday, He brought him the fowl and he named them; on Wednesday, He brought him creatures of the earth and he named them; and on Thursday, He brought him creatures of the sea and he named them. When Adam observe that God created all [of these creatures] male and female, he felt sad wondering how he was created alone unlike the other creatures he had named. It was not that the Holy Trinity were unwilling to create Eve. But it was to let him find her with excitement and eagerness as he is questing when he say this . *Andäm*, to let him find her with engagement; he is engaging [her] when he say this; *Andäm*, to let him find her with sadness and melancholy as something found with sad and grief is useful and productive. *Andäm*, if he faced some bad experiences with her, he could be frightened saying They

⁹ here words that have been inserted by the author are rendered in parenthesis for the sake of clarity.

¹⁰ In this translation, the pronouns he refers to Adam, she refers to Eve, He refers to God and They refers to the Holy Trinity.

created her for me without my request. [But now] he will be tolerant at the time of quarrel saying that it was by my request that They have created her for me. After this, the LORD God said, *it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a companion who helps him.*

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept:

God befell Adam a deep sleep and he slept¹¹. After these, God created [Adam] Eve after 8 days Adam was created. Adam was created in the morning¹² and Eve was created at the 3rd hour of the 8th day. *Hatäta*. If it is asked why the Holy Trinity created Eve while he [Adam] was asleep, it is because it implies that their sexual relationship was on the bed. *Andäm*, the Holy Trinity created Eve for Adam when he [Adam] was in between sleeping and awakening; when he was neither conscious nor asleep. Had they created her when he was completely conscious, he could have felt the pain as deeds of the Holy Trinity is not a phantom. And if he was completely asleep, he would have taken her as a miracle. *Andäm*, had They created her when he was more conscious, he would have kept himself away from any sexual intercourse considering her as his sister. And had They created her when he was completely asleep, he would consider her as an outsider¹³. *Andäm*, to explain the prophecy and the symbolism behind. The prophecy is what it says *I am asleep and alive in my consciousness*; and the symbolism is as Adam caused Eve being in between sleeping and awakening, the LORD caused the second Eve, baptism, being alive in his Divinity and dead in his humanity. If it is asked whether They created her from his [Adam's] left or right side, it was from his left side¹⁴. For this to be true, left is weak. Likewise, women are weak; left is crooked. Likewise, women are crooked for good deeds. Left is calm. Likewise, women are calm for their wishes (for what they said); *Andäm*, there is much blood on the left [side of human beings]. Likewise, women have the bleed of blood. *Andäm*, on the left side [of human beings], there is much water. Likewise, women have much water in their body. *Andäm*, They created her from his right side. For this to be true, right is powerful. Likewise, women are powerful to accomplish their wishes. *Andäm*, right is fast. Likewise, women are fast to accomplish their wishes; *Andäm*, right is honest. Likewise, women are honest for what they like to do. *Andäm*, as Adam gave forth the first Eve from his right side, the LORD gave forth the second Eve, baptism from his right side¹⁵. If it is asked why didn't He create her from above [Adam's]

¹¹ The commentary of the book of Creation (Ge'ez, no. 29) provides the time of his slept as 'the third hour (of the day)'. Getatchew and Misrak (1991: 83).

¹² The commentary of the book of Creation (Amh. no. 26) explains why God created Adam in the morning: "If one asks, 'Why did [H]e create him in the morning?' (I say) he created him in the morning to say, 'You are bright; I shall make you rule over the bright Kingdom of Heaven' ". Getatchew and Misrak (1991:46).

¹³ The commentary of the Book of Creation (Ge'ez, no. 32) gives a different explanation for the concept under discussion: "if you ask, 'why did bring [sleep] upon Adam at the time of Eve's creation?' [I say (that) this, too, is an example: As he was] between sleeping and awakening, Eve, bringer of death, came out from him. Likewise Jesus Christ, too, as he was dead in his humanity and living in his divinity on the wood of the cross, brought out of his right side for our sake hot blood and pure water, bringers of life." Getatchew and Misrak (1991: 83 - 84).

¹⁴ The commentary of the Book of Creation (Amh. no. 31) tells us that she was created from his right side. Getatchew & Misrak, pp. 48 & 83.

¹⁵ The commentary of the Book of Creation (Ge'ez, no. 83) gives another explanation: if one asks, "And why did he create her from his right side?", (I say) it is an example of Jesus Christ. As Eve who came out of the side of Adam brought death upon us, Jesus Christ, too, brought out of his right side hot

head or from below [Adam's] foot, had He created her from his head, she could be more arrogant as women are so; and had He been created her from his foot, she could be more lowly as they are so. He created her from the middle of [Adam's] body to let her live below her husband and above the family. *Andām*, the rib is covered by cloth so that woman is the secret wealth for her husband as the Apostle says *the woman is the glory of her husband. Does not even nature itself teach you?*¹⁶ The scholar interpreted this in harmony with [the aforementioned commentary]¹⁷. Adam didn't get any defect on his body when God took a bone from his side. Likewise, defect has not been found in the virginity of Our Lady Mary when LORD became Man taking flesh from her flesh and soul from her soul. As it says *as the building of the body of the first Adam did not lose anything when a bone of his side was taken away, so also the seal of Mary's virginity was not destroyed when she gave birth to the father of Adam in the flesh*. No defect has been found in the humanity of Eve when she was formed from Adam with out offspring. Likewise, defect has not been found in the Humanity of the LORD because of the absence of offspring when He became Man from Our Lady. As it says *his humanity was not inferior because he had no Father to be born of his seed, but was perfectly incarnated from a virgin only. As Eve's female nature was not inferior through having had no mother when she was formed from the bone of Adam's side*. Adam felt no pain when he effected Eve from his side. Likewise the holy virgin did also felt no maternal pain when she born the LORD in virginity. As it says, *as Adam did not feel pain when a bone was taken from his side, so also the Galilean Mother of God did not feel travail*. *Andām* had our Lady not effected our LORD without man as Adam did effect Eve, women would be inferior to men¹⁸.

and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

[God] took one of his ribs and closed the side of Adam's body where he took the rib. *Andām*, he filled up the rib he pulled out, expelled, took by flesh.

22. *And God made the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, a woman*

And God carved the rib he had taken from Adam as a woman with eye, ear, hand, foot, and nose.

He made her a woman

He made her a woman with a female body. *Andām*, He made her [as some one] to be united with him. *Andām*, He made her cooperative and shining. Since [the word] woman means cooperative and shining. But eating the food which He forbid them to eat, the cooperative she became lonesome, and the shining she became dark.

¹⁶ blood and pure water and gave us life.
¹⁶ 1 Cor. 11 v. 7 & 14. The commentary of the Book of Creation (Ge'ez, no. 30) gives a different explanation for this: "If you further ask, 'Why did he create her from his side, and did not bring her from (somewhere) else?', I say it is not because he lacked (a source) whence to bring, but thinking that he relationship to him may be strengthened for her, he created her taking soul from his soul and flesh from his flesh." Getatchew and Misrak (1991: 83).

¹⁷ The forthcoming commentary is taken from the commentary of the Book of Liturgy named after Cyril.

¹⁸ According to the teachings of the Church, this fact makes women equal to men in front of God.

and He brought her unto the man

God presented her unto Adam.

23. *And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: let her be my wife,*

He said she is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She should be united with me as my wife.

It is to say because she was taken out of Man

since she was effected from me, her husband. *Andām*, a reading says *let her be a woman and be called the same*. It says let her be called a woman. Since [the word] woman means the one who has been extracted from man. It says *she came out of man* since she was effected, extracted from man.

24. *Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife.*

Since Eve was found from the side of Adam, man shall leave his father and mother and will follow his wife whether she goes down to the desert or up to the highland.

and they shall be one flesh

the two will be one body wearing the same cloth and inheriting the same honour. *Andām*, if his sexual interest is aroused, *he shall not say let me do it with my mother; and the woman shall not also say let me do it with my father*. They will be one body in [sexual] practices. It says *and they shall be one flesh*. The two will be one body. *Hatāta*. They don't say to each other it is yours [Adam's] if what is borne is a baby boy and yours [Eve's] if what is borne is a baby girl. *Andām* they don't say each other it is yours [Adam's] if what is borne resembles him, and yours [Eve's] if what is borne resembles her. *Andām* they created a boy while they were two. *Andām* [the baby boy] borne took a blood from his mother and genes from his father.

25. *And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*

Adam and Eve were not ashamed of each other while they were naked from the cloth of this world. *Hatāta*. Because they wore light. If it is asked light divulges rather than hides, it hides if He orders. *Andām*, they were not ashamed each other as children do. They were naked from the cloth of sin until the seven years are over. They were not ashamed of each other by the cloth of sin.

References

- Abbadie, d'A. 1859. *Catalogué rasionné de manuscrits éthiopiens*. Paris.
- Cowley, R.W. 1987. *Ethiopian Biblical Interpretation: A Study in Exegetical Tradition and Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dillmann, Augustus. Ed., 1853. *Octateuchs Aethiopicus*. Lipsiae: Vogel.
- Getatchew Haile and Macomber, William. 1982. *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*. Vol. VI. Collegeville, MN: Hill Monastic Manuscript Library.
- Getatchew Haile and Misrak Amare. 1991. Beauty of Creation. *Journal of Semetic Studies*, Mon. 16, Worcester: University of Manchester, Billings and Sons Ltd.
- Habtä Maryam Wärqnäḥ (*Liqä Səlt'ānat*). 1963 E.C. *yäityopya ortodox täwahədo betä krəstiyan emnätənnā təmhər*. Addis Ababa: Bərhanənnā Selam Printing Press.
- Heyer, Frederick. 1966. "The Teaching of Tərgum In The Ethiopian Orthodox Church". In: *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Vol.2, pp.
- Marcos Daud. 1954. *The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church*. Addis Ababa: Berhanenna selam Printing Press of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie.
- መጽሐፍ ቅዱስ የብሉይና የሐዲስ ኪዳን መጽሐፍ በአማርኛ፡፡ ብርሃንና ሰላም ማተሚያ ቤት፡፡ አዲስ አበባ፡፡ 1953 ዓ.ም፡፡
- መጽሐፈ ቅዱስ በግእዝና በአማርኛ፡፡ ተስፋ ማተሚያ ቤት፡፡ አዲስ አበባ፡፡ 1962 ዓ.ም፡፡
- māšhaf qiddus yäbluy inna yähaddis kidan māšhaf bäamarñña*. 1953 E.C. Addis Ababa: Bərhanənnā Selam Printing Press.
- Mogäs Iqubä Giyorgis, *Liqä mäsäməran*. 1955 E.C. *Mätshafä sənä fətrāt məslä 5-tu a 'əmadä məstir*. Asmara: Mārəha hawaryat Press.
- Miguel, Angel G. 1999. *Ethiopian Biblical Commentaries on the Prophet Micah*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Pederson, Kirsten S. 1995. *Traditional Ethiopian Exegesis of The Book of Psalms*. Wiesbaden: Harrawssowitz.
- Säifä Səllassie Yohannəs. 1995. "The *Andəmta* Commentary in Ethiopian Culture and Education". *Ethiopian Review of Culture* IV – V (1995), pp. 121 – 130.

Traditional Teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Christine Chaillot¹

Traditional teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been for centuries deeply part of the religious education, life and ethos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The traditional teachers and students are still numerous, but the greatest teachers are passing away and Ethiopian youth is attracted by modern life. What about the future of traditional teaching? In order to begin to 'save' something of this unique oral tradition I conducted interviews with some traditional teachers in renowned places on the basis of a questionnaire asking them where they had studied, which subjects, with which teachers, how long, etc, in order to understand their training and effort. How could we all together keep traditional education alive for the coming Ethiopian generations? And what can be done in order to save it ?

Traditional Teaching

Traditional teaching in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church includes: Church singing and movement (*aqwaqwam*) ; poetry (*qene*) ; commentaries on the Bible, on the writings of the Church fathers and of the monks. For many centuries this teaching has been deeply part of the religious education, life and ethos of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. The teaching is based on oral methods and memorization, with repetition and learning by heart by the students. The teaching is transmitted orally from generation to generation.

Every time I met traditional teachers, I became very fascinated by this unique way of oral teaching still existing in a Christian Church today, in Africa.

In her book printed in 1955, *Ethiopia, A Cultural History*, Silvia Pankhurst wrote a whole chapter on "traditional schools of the Church".² Every village has its church and nearly every church has its school. Memorizing predominates in the traditional instruction. Knowledge was imparted in the church schools until the beginning of the 20th century when a few state schools were opened under Emperor Menelik. In 1944 a modern Theological School was opened in Addis Ababa for advanced studies for deacons and priests. In Silvia Pankhurst's time all Church revenues were consolidated in a central Church Fund. Until the Derg time (1974) each church had its own separate revenue for its upkeep and that of its school, which was derived from endowments (lands or their produce, or money) granted by the emperors, royal persons, governors and pious parishioners.

Nowadays, the traditional elementary Church education still goes from learning how to read until becoming a deacon. It provides instruction for reading and writing in Ge'ez and Amharic, with emphasis on reading the Scriptures in Ge'ez, still the liturgical language of the Church, first by mastering the syllabary of the twenty-six basic characters, each having seven forms.

¹ Christine Chaillot has written several articles and books on the Oriental Orthodox Churches (Coptic, Ethiopian, Syrian Orthodox, Malankara and Armenian). Address : Geneva, Switzerland, email: acchaillot@hotmail.com

² Pankhurst, Silvia, (1955, 232-283).

The second stage called *fidel hawaria* begins with the reading of the First Epistle of Saint John.

In the third stage the Gospel of Saint John, the three other Gospels as well as the Psalms are read.

In oral education some prayers are memorized such as the Nicaean Creed (*Tselsta Haymanot*), prayers to Christ (*Melke Iyesus*), prayers to the Virgin (*Wudasse Maryam*, *Melke Maryam*) and prayers to become a deacon (*Gebre Dikouna*)³.

Then the education in Church schools for higher studies can begin, in different branches: Church music (*zema*), the composition of poetry (*qene*), as well as commentaries and other matters⁴.

There are four disciplines of Church music studied in the school of liturgical music (*zema bet*): the study of the chant book (*degwa*) which has five branches (*yohannes*, *meraf*, *tsoma degwa* for Lent, *astemero* and *fasiku*); hymns sung after communion (*zemmare*) and prayers for the dead (*mawasit*); 'the way of standing' or 'moving' (*aqwaqwam*) for monthly and annual festivals accompanied by sistra, prayer sticks and drums executed by the choir while singing (*mahelet*). The liturgy (*qedasse*) and the prayers of the Hours (*se'atat*) are studied separately.

The highest schools where the final exams are taken for Church music (*zema*) are: for *degwa*, *meraf* and *tsoma degwa* at Bethlehem (Gondar province); for *zemmare* and *mawasit* at Zuramba (near Bethlehem); for *mahelet* and *aqwaqwam* in Gondar City and Beta Maryam (South Wollo); for *qedasse* (including *se'atat*) at Selelkula in Wollo and in the Monastery of Debre Abbay in Tigray.

For learning the composition of poetry (*qene*), the student goes to the house of poetry (*qene bet*). First the student has to know the Ge'ez vocabulary and grammar very well. In order to compose a *qene*, the student must comment on passages of the Bible in a *qene* for the feast of the day; or on the lives of saints for the feast of saints; he may also introduce moral precepts and even contemporary events. The main aim is to give a double meaning to words and sentences, with symbolism and allusion, as in parables.

Among the great schools of *qene* the most famous are in Gondar and in Wadela also known as Wadladelanta (Wollo), without forgetting Washera, Gonj and Tselalo (all three in Gojam).

For the study of exegesis and theology, the school or house of the Books (*mashafa bet*) is the highest school for studies of the Old and New Testaments and of other books and their commentaries.

At the end of the study of the books of the Bible, the way to prepare the Church calendar (*abushaker*) can be studied. This school used to be independant and is declining today.

The study of the Books of the Church Fathers (*Liqawint*) includes the study of the writings of the Church Fathers of Alexandria (such as Saints Cyril and Athanasius) and of Cappadocia (mainly Saints Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom) and other Fathers such as Saint Ephrem the Syrian.

³ To become a deacon one has to learn the *zema* of *Wudasse Maryam*, *arrayam* (extracts from Old and New Testaments), *kestet* (also extracts from Old and New Testaments); and *tsoma degwa* used for Great Lent, which is shorter and easier to learn than *degwa*.

⁴ Painting is another traditional subject of study which includes decorating the walls of the church and the pages of books, as well as manuscript writing. It will not be included in this study. Traditionally painters (*tse'ali*) and scribes (*kumtse'hafy*) are monks or priests (specially for painting) and also *deberas* and lay men.

These patristic extracts are gathered in two books: *The Faith of the Fathers* (*Haymanota Abaw*) and the *Kerlos*, after the name of Saint Cyril of Alexandria. These texts refer to faith and dogmatic theology.

In the school of patristics canon law is also taught. The book *The Law of the Kings* (*Fetha Negest*) is a collection of canons including those of the first three Ecumenical Councils, the *Synodos*, the *Didascalia*, the *Epistle of Clement* of Rome and the *Testament of Our Lord*.

Another traditional study is the study of monastic and ascetic life with reading and commentary on *The Book of the Monks* (*Meshafe Menekosat*) which include three works: *Filiksios* with works by Philoxenus of Mabug; *Mar Yesak*, that is Saint Isaac of Nineveh, a Syriac author of the 6th century; and *The Elder or Spiritual Teacher* (*Aragawi Manfasawi*) by John of Saba another Syriac author of the 6th century. All were written in Syriac and translated into Ge'ez.

The best traditional schools are: for the Old Testament in Gondar, in Gojam (such as in Bitchena, Motta, Dima Giorgis) and in Axum; for the New Testament in Gondar; and for both in Saint Paul's Theological College in Addis Ababa and in Debre Libanos Monastery; for Patristic Books in the Monastery of Debre Libanos and in Ba'ata Church in Addis Ababa; for Monastic Books in Ba'ata Church in Addis Ababa.

The choice of the school depends on the interest of the student: he can study *degwa*, *gedasse* and/or *gene*. *Aqwaqwam* can only be studied after *zema*. Also one cannot study the commentaries of the Books without a good knowledge of Ge'ez which is studied in the *gene school*. There the student has also to study and to understand the system of commentaries which is connected to the system of *gene* (for example by understanding the importance of each word). One must also study the commentaries of the Old and New Testaments before studying patristics.

What has been written on traditional teaching?

Until now little has been written on traditional teaching. Mengistu Lemmu wrote several articles on traditional teaching (in English and Amharic); and so did Haile Gabriel Dagne and Alemayou Moges.

Among the foreigners let us name again Silvia Pankhurst. Roger Cowley has written down some Ethiopian commentaries of the Bible.

Professor Friedrich Heyer had a deep concern for traditional education by helping some traditional schools in Ethiopia through his association called *Debre Tabor* and its journal of the same name which has some articles on traditional education. He also wrote articles. For example, just before the 1974 Revolution, Friedrich Heyer and Fred Göricke produced together a long article on the sociology of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church which includes some remarks on traditional education.⁵

Some articles were written by Dr Verena Böll.⁶

When I was preparing my book on the life and spirituality of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church Tradition⁷, I had general interviews with several traditional teachers and I devoted a special chapter to this traditional teaching which is so specific to the Ethiopian Church. On 29 October 2002 I gave a lecture in UNESCO in Paris on the intangible patrimony of Christian Ethiopia, which includes traditional education:

⁵ Heyer, Friedrich and F. Göricke, (1976).

⁶ Böll, Verena, (2003, 31-45). In Marx, Annegret, (2001, 45-52) there is a reference (written with the help of Verena Böll) to the 'Kirchenschule' or 'traditional schools' with some pictures.

⁷ Chaillot, Christine, (2002, 83-100).

“Quelques Notes sur le Patrimoine chrétien intangible de l’Ethiopie chrétienne: l’éducation traditionnelle”.⁸

Problems and future of traditional teaching

Today there are still thousands of students of the Church tradition in many monasteries and schools all around Ethiopia, and many teachers. In the large monasteries and in the large parishes (*debr*), the number of teachers and of courses is of course greater, and the level of traditional teaching is higher than in small monasteries and parishes. One can say that traditional teaching has more or less remained the same until today. But the greatest teachers are old and passing away while the young of Ethiopia are more and more attracted by modern life.

With modernity growing in Ethiopia, one can wonder what will be the future situation of traditional teaching there. Thus some questions to be put are the following. What about the future of traditional teaching? How to make sure that it will not disappear in the future? Which Ethiopian Orthodox boy will still study the Ge’ez language and have an interest in traditional teaching within ten, twenty or thirty years?

In a lecture which I gave in the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London, on March 15th 2005, invited by the Anglo-Ethiopian Society, “Traditional Education in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, today and tomorrow”⁹, some of these problems were mentioned.

First, the political change in 1974 from a monarchic system to a communist antireligious system has affected traditional Church life at all levels, and secular education has increased. Until recently it was normal for boys to go and study in the traditional schools. Today boys do not obey this tradition blindly, however a few young boys who follow modern education in state schools now follow, at the same time, traditional education in church schools; and so do a few university students.

One has also to understand how much the traditional teachers made great efforts by studying for years, travelling, etc. For example, Memher Abba Gebre Selassie of Saint Paul’s Theological College in Addis Ababa, told me in 2002, being 89, that he had studied for fifty years! Today some young people think they know everything after a few years!

Another present problem is that the great scholars are less and less numerous: when they pass away their knowledge, which is known orally and is not written down, passes with them. For example, in 2002, there were only very few “four-eyed” teachers¹⁰ left in Ethiopia, such as Memher Gebre Selassie in Saint Paul’s in Addis Ababa and Abuna Merhe Kristos (Archbishop of Mekelle).

It is a fact that the life of students of the traditional teaching is hard and demanding for contemporary boys. For example, they leave their family; they beg for their food among families of the neighbourhood but also sometimes far away; and their daily life as students of the Church tradition is most of the time poor and very demanding. Studying in the church and begging, which were done by earlier students were seen as spiritual ways of life and with a Biblical understanding; this was then discouraged as being contrary to the communist ideology under the Derg regime. At the same time, how could one ask people who were traditionally feeding the boys to give food in times

⁸ See under ‘conferences’ on the website www.orthodialog.com

⁹ See under ‘conferences’ on the website www.orthodialog.com

¹⁰ A ‘four-eyed’ teacher (*arat ayna*) is one who can master the four highest subjects of traditional teaching: Old and New Testaments, the Book of the Church fathers (*Liqawint*) and the Book of the Monks.

of war, and also of drought and famine, when they did not have (and still, at times, often don't have) enough for themselves?

Today Church activities are generally centred on more utilitarian activities, for example preaching, or being a Sunday school teacher or leader, rather than on traditional teaching.

Traditionally there was an understanding about the gifts given to the traditional teachers for their living. Since the Derg communist period, most of the teachers receive wages paid by the Church. But some consider them too low, especially in the countryside, for example 70 birrs in a small place and up to 700 birrs or more in Addis Ababa. Thus teachers from the countryside shifted to the towns, which allowed some of them to begin traditional teaching in some urban parishes but impoverished the countryside schools. Nowadays good salaries are most of the time a priority and so are career prospects.

After having received traditional education, some graduates of traditional teaching chose, or were appointed, to jobs not connected with their traditional education. Thus, unfortunately, some traditional teachers, including some who were very learned, went far from traditional teaching, for example by having an administrative job where they do not transmit their knowledge.

Projects about the traditional teaching

In order to record something of this unique oral tradition, before it is too late, I began in 2005 to make specific interviews with some of the traditional teachers, mostly, when possible, the famous and the old, in renowned places on the basis of a questionnaire, in order to understand their training and efforts.

First I asked the traditional teachers I was meeting where they were born and in which year, where they had begun to study and where they continued their studies, what subjects did they study, with which teachers (for each subject), and for how many years; and also who were the teachers of *their* teachers, with their places of studying and teaching, and dates of death, (when remembered). I also asked about any special recollections concerning these teachers and their way of teaching.

Such interviews show that, as described above, all the teachers began with the reading (*fidel*) classes until *tsoma degwa*, nearly always in their native places, sometimes with their father if their father was a teacher; then they were staying and studying in the same place or were moving from place to place and studying different subjects with different teachers; but they were not always following the same trajectory, that is not always choosing the same subjects nor in the same order, or they chose to study one subject in greater depth over several years; they also studied for different periods of time, more or less long.

What is common to all is that they all moved around a lot, most of the time walking, sometimes far away from their native dwelling place or from the other places where they had studied.

In that way of analysis one may understand, step by step, who were the most famous traditional teachers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in the course of the 20th century, mostly in its second half, and in which places. Of course, all such places are already known, specially the famous ones, where the final examinations are taken; but it is important to explain it in a systematic way and write it down. At the same time it is important to underline the names of the most famous teachers, alive or not, whose names must not be forgotten.

Thus such interviews allow one to begin writing a little history of the traditional education in Ethiopia, as each interview is a page of this history. Once other people could add information from their own interviews, this eventually would allow us to make a more and more complete chronology and historical record.

In fact, my proposal is that a coordinated team should work and put together their research. Such a team should not only make lists of the traditional teachers with whom they have conducted interviews, but also publish them so that the same teacher would not be questioned several times. It would also allow other teachers, maybe less famous and not so old, to be interviewed.

Then a table could be made with all these names and places of the interviewed teachers, including the names and places of their own teachers, which would show the importance of certain teachers and of some famous schools, as well as their links.

At the same time a map should be made showing all the places mentioned, with the most famous ones being underlined.

There should also be other written studies explaining in detail each teaching system of the traditional schools: what is taught and how it is taught and also the differences which exist in how the same subject is taught in different schools and places (for *degwa*, *aqwaqwam* and *qene*).

The daily life of the students and teachers of the Church tradition and their way of studying and teaching should also be explained and written down in detail.

Organized teams should also produce as many records as possible in different ways, especially by taping and making videos. And a kind of audio-visual library should be organized with all the tapes and videos of the interviews made with traditional teachers. Such documents would remain as a testimony and records of this oral teaching which is disappearing.

Such tasks cannot be undertaken alone. I have already sought the collaboration of the Youth association of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church in Addis Ababa, *Mehebere Kidussan*, knowing that its members have a wish similar to mine which is to keep alive the traditional education. In December 2005 it was decided to organize teams for taping a group of selected teachers during their lessons, for several months each (if possible), every day, and also with videos in some cases, in 13 different famous places of traditional teaching in Ethiopia. When I visited Ethiopia in February 2007 the teams of recording were beginning to be organized.

Conclusion

In 2004, the chairman of the Tabor Society, Pastor Beinke, who had made several visits to traditional schools in Ethiopia, told me: “ If the traditional schools do not get the proper help, they will lose their studies, which means that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church will lose its memory ; in other words, if Church tradition dies out, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church will lose its identity. ”

Traditional teachers who are strong Christian believers emphasise that traditional teaching is important because it is strongly connected to the Bible and it speaks about the mystery of God, that is theology, and through it Christian moral and spiritual teaching is given. As for *qene*, Adnasu Djambare indicates that it develops the conscience and renews the spirit.

In 1971, Ephraim Isaac wrote: “ In Ethiopia, as perhaps among African and Semitic people in general, religion is not a system for the soul, but a way of life... The remedy

for the spiritual as well as the material ailments of man is knowledge - relevant knowledge.”¹¹

It is important to save this knowledge of traditional and theological teaching because this is at the heart of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church tradition.

I also asked for the comments of some Ethiopian traditional teachers and people about this question. For example, while asking permission in the Monastery of Debre Libanos in January 2002 for taping the teachers, and worrying about receiving a negative answer, I was most happy to receive a positive one. In fact I was told that some weeks previously a famous teacher of New Testament, Gebre Hewod, had passed away and that there was no tangible record kept of his wonderful teaching. Thus the monks encouraged me and told me it was good to tape the traditional teachers in Ethiopia.

In any case, more should be written down on the subject. And we should all keep this question in our mind: how to keep this teaching alive for the coming generations? And how to find ways of making this interest grow among many, especially among the youngsters in Ethiopia itself.

In order to keep traditional education alive, some people think that there is a need for integration between traditional and modern teaching, as is the case in the Orthodox Theological College of the Holy Trinity in Addis Ababa.

The old generation was so dedicated for learning. Teacher Henok of Axum told me: “In the past we used to come to the traditional schools for the knowledge and to serve God.” These are certainly the two main arguments that young people should have in mind and heart in order to continue and keep alive the traditional education in Ethiopia.

Traditional teachers should be spiritual. Abuna Mehere Kristos speaks of his teacher Toro (d. 1974 EC), in the Church of Sire Medhane Alem in Salale in Shoa, near Debre Libanos/Tsige, who was a deeply spiritual and holy person who did not care for the material things of this world. And traditional students also need to be spiritual persons.

This traditional teaching of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church is not only a local patrimony. The year 2002 was the United Nations Year for Cultural Heritage. It is important to underline that for UNESCO it is not only the tangible patrimony which has to be saved, but also the intangible patrimony. Traditional education being part of intangible patrimony thus it must be saved not only for Ethiopia, but also for the world patrimony.

References

- Böll, Verena. 2003. ‘Andemta-Lehrer der Kirchenschule Mädhane Aläm in Gondär, Äthiopien.’ In: *Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft*, Vol. 35, pp. 31-45.
- Chaillot, Christine. 2002. *The Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church Tradition. Life and Spirituality*. Paris: Inter Orthodox Dialogue, pp. 83-100.
- Heyer, Friedrich and F. Göricke. 1976. ‘The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia as a Social Institution,’. In: *International Search Book for Sociology of Knowledge and Religion*, Vol. 10.
- Isaac, Ephrem. 1971. ‘Social Structure of the Ethiopian Church.’ *Ethiopian Observer*, Vol. 14(4), p. 282.
- Marx, Annegret. 2001. ‘Weitergabe der Tradition.’ In: *Katalog der Äthiopienabteilung, Sankt Augustin: Museum Haus Völker und Kulturen*, pp. 45-52.
- Pankhurst, Silvia. 1955, *Ethiopia, A Cultural History*. London, chapter 15, pp. 232-283.

¹¹ Isaac, Ephrem, (1971, 282).

Exploring *iddir* Toward Developing a Contextual Theology of Ethiopia

Solomon Dejene¹

The aim of this paper is to get insight into the (symbolic) value of *iddirs* that could be employed to develop a contextual theology of Ethiopia. While *iddirs* and churches are intimate to Ethiopians, they do not have a dialogical relationship. The social relevance of churches can only be realized through a dialogical work with *iddirs*. And if *iddirs* want to reappraise themselves, it is essential to become interrelated with churches without compromising their pluralistic traits.

Introduction

In the first sections I will present briefly the definition, origin and nature of *iddirs* based on existing literature. Then I will give my own critical review of the studies so far. Then I will discuss what the cultural and theological relevance of *iddirs* is. Furthermore, I will have a brief theological reflection on *iddir*. Finally, I will conclude with a short remark.

Iddir

In their not so long history, *iddirs* have spread throughout Ethiopia so rapidly that it is now unthinkable to imagine a village without *iddir* with the exception of remote areas. *Iddir* is the most widespread association but its composition, system, approach and size may differ from place to place. But all over *iddirs* are community oriented, and mostly religiously and ethnically heterogeneous unless the vicinity is homogenous. They have a high level of participation (Dejene Aredo 2003) and promote self-esteem as each with his/her minor tasks counts (Alemayehu Seifu 1968). They are also egalitarian and transparent (Dejene 2003).

Iddir is an indigenous voluntary association. Even if there are similar association else where in Africa, *iddir* is of indigenous origin (Pankhurst 2003). There are numerous types of *iddirs*. The most common one is the neighborhood *iddir* which is formed by people living in the same neighborhood. Second to it comes workplace *iddir*. Yet one can find nowadays various types of *iddirs*. The number of members varies from tens to over a thousand members depending on the area and the network. In work places the number is usually related to the size of the organization (see Pankhurst 2003; Dejene 2003; Shiferaw 2002, Fecadu Gedamu 1974).

Origin

In the academic world there are different views on the origin of *iddirs*. Some attribute its origin to urbanization and claim that it was started by migrants who came to work in the city. Others associate it with the Italian occupation when social life was disrupted.

¹ Solomon Dejene, Nijmegen Institute for Mission Studies, Radboud University of Nijmegen, P.O.Box 9103, 6500 HD Nijmegen, The Netherlands s.dejene@nim.ru.nl

Alemayehu (1968) claims that no *iddirs* existed before the Italian occupation. He argues that rural life became difficult during the occupation and the city became attractive for those affected. This drastic migratory move to the city accelerated the pace of urbanization. And those who just came from the rural area were not accustomed to the way of life in the city. In rural areas communal life was strong. Mutual relationship among neighbors/relatives is a ruling norm. But in towns people live in physical proximity yet in anonymity. Many new migrants found themselves uprooted and got confused. In time of need they had either very few connections or none at all to lean on. The urban centers were hostile to them and incompatible with their way of life; accordingly it necessitated the creation of associations like *iddir* (Alemayehu 1968).

Fecadu (1974) claimed that *iddirs* originated three decades ago in Addis Ababa by migrant groups from acephalous backgrounds. This corresponds roughly to the Italian occupation period (1936-41). He further states that the migrants transplanted their rural social structures to town with certain adjustments to the city way of life. His study reveals that people from centralized social and political systems did not initially join the *iddirs*. He relates this with the military camp like organizational structure of most of the Ethiopian towns. This in no way encourages differentiation or the development of independent social organizations. But the towns were completely restructured by the Italians. The politico-military structure was removed along with its system of patron-client relationship. This in turn provided the new migrants and people of the lower stratum with an opportunity to organize themselves (Fecadu 1974). Mekuria (1973 in Ottaway 1976) too reasons out in the same way. The Italian occupation caused dislocation and uprootedness as 'the countryside was the battleground for the Ethiopian Patriotic Forces'. Farmers were executed for harboring them. People sought safe haven and work in the Italian garrison towns. The mutual support system to which the new migrants were accustomed in the countryside did not exist in the newly emerging towns during the Italian occupation. The migrants were isolated or they purposely isolated themselves. However, with the threat of death around, they could no longer stay disconnected but form a network at least among themselves in order to have a decent burial. According to Mekuria *iddirs* initially drew membership from the same ethnic group or from people coming from the same locality by transplanting their traditional mutual support system

Pankhurst and some others, on the other hand, are of view that *iddir* started in Addis Ababa several years after the city was founded in 1886. He also argues that there was no reference to *iddir* in the historical travel literature and chronicles prior the 20th century. According to Pankhurst, it only appears in the D'Abaddie's Amharic dictionary of 1881 with a meaning 'custom, usage' (2003:11, 16). In line with this Korten asserts that *iddirs* date back to late 19th century Addis Ababa (1972).

Still there is another difference among academics in regard its urban or rural origin. Pankhurst argues that *iddirs* are exclusively of urban origin. Even though there are many traditional forms of cooperation related to the rural life, there is no evidence that such cooperation was the foundation of *iddirs*. Following the argument of Alemayehu, Pankhurst further elaborates that people should not confuse the traditional trend of mutual help and other associations with *iddir*. The existence of a list of members, written bylaws, monthly monetary contributions, regular meetings, differentiated and fixed coverage scheme came into existence in an urban, monetized and literate setting rather than in the rural area where these did not exist.

Yet others claim that *iddir* is a traditional mutual support system that is transplanted from the rural area with certain modification so as to fit in the urban life (Dejene 2003; Fecadu 1974; Markakis 1974; Mekuria 1973; Levine 1965). By providing an illustrative example from the Gurage experience, Fecadu claims that the strong social orientation among the Gurages and other neighboring ethnic groups has led to the establishment of such urban support systems that could serve fulfill the social and material needs of the new migrant communities and channel their connectedness with their villages. But Dejene is less stern on this point and states that *iddirs* could trace their origin in some rudimentary mutual support form in rural areas long before the Italian occupation. His conjecture is based on the commonness of mutual support networks in rural areas. But he is of opinion that *iddirs* assumed their current form in urban areas where monetization is high (Dejene 2003).

Little is known about how many *iddirs* there were before and during the occupation as they were not registered. However, the 1966 association registration regulation was a decisive factor in determining that *iddirs* must be registered in order to become a legal entity (Shiferaw 2002; Pankhurst 2003; Markakis 1974; Korten 1972). A number of *iddirs* were registered but the vast majority did not see the need for registration, or was afraid that the government would interfere in their activities. However, this became in no way a constraint to the expansion of *iddirs* (Shiferaw 2002).

Most academics agree on the fact that *iddir* membership was originally limited to the poor. Fecadu (1974) states that the *iddir* was initiated by the lower stratum of the society. Markakis (1974) claims also that membership was drawn from the uneducated strata (Dejene 1993; Mekuria 1973).

Initiators

Endreas and Pankurst (1958) were the first who came up with the idea that *iddir* might have its origin among the Gurages. Building on this claim Pankhurst refers to a pamphlet by *Yehibret Minch iddir* (a Soddo Kistane/Guraghe *iddir*) which claims that their *iddir* was established in 1907 by merchants of hides, wax, fat and coffee. These people were despised and discriminated in Addis Ababa partly due to the smell of their ware. They could only gather together in the wood and bury their dead at night. Held during one of their meetings, they were brought to *Fitawrari*² Habteghiorghis, the Minister of Defense. They explained to the minister their purpose of getting together. He gave them permission. Pankhurst associates this with both the ethnic foundation of the *iddir* and its origin from the Gurages. He also argues that opponents of this view have not come up with any counter evidence (Pankhurst 2003). Pankhurst and Endreas (1958) base their claim on the fact that the Gurages had a culture of tending the cattle of the deceased and work on his farm as long as two months. However, Alemayehu (1968) argues that this could not be taken as evidence for such mutual support systems exist among the Amharas and Oromos.

Fecadu (1974) asserts that ethnic groups from a non-centralized socio-political system which were not bound by the clientele system of the Ethiopian state established a social fiber for mutual support. He states that initially they were formed along ethnic lines and local connections mainly because members of one ethnic group settled in one neighborhood. Even if he states that *iddir* is borrowed from acephalous ethnic groups such as the Gurages, he does not directly ascribe it to any particular ethnic group. He

² Fitawrari is a traditional Ethiopian military title.

further states that as of the 50's the *iddirs* have become multiethnic as the residential segregation was abandoned and the *iddir* played an integrative role by bringing people of different ethnic groups together.

From monoethnic to multiethnic and from monofunctional to multifunctional

Markakis (1974) states that people prefer to join an *iddir* with a fair number of members from their own ethnic group and Christians and Moslems have separate *iddirs*. Many of the literatures on *iddir* claim that *iddirs* started as an ethnic-based association and later transformed themselves into a multiethnic association with various forms due to both internal and external factors (Mekuria 1973; Fecadu 1974; Shiferaw 2002; Dejene 2003; Pankhurst 2003, Pankhurst & Damen Hailemariam 2000). Some give emphasis to the external factor by stating that both the imperial and the Derg governments discouraged, in some cases, even forced ethnic-based *iddirs* to change their names and reconsider their membership (Pankhurst & Damen 2000; Pankhurst 2003; Shiferaw 2002). Others put emphasis on the fluid nature of *iddirs* which they consider as a quality that has made them adaptable to the multiethnic context of the urban setting in which multiethnic based membership was a natural result (Dejene 2003; Shiferaw 2002; Fecadu 1974).

Alemayehu (1968), on the other hand, reasons out completely in the opposite direction. He asserts that *iddirs* started as neighborhood associations. Later on occupation and tribal *iddirs* came into existence.

Mostly the primary aim of *iddirs* is – at least in their initial stages and now in some cases – the provision of mutual support in time of death. Among the functions of *iddir* decent burial comes first and foremost. Financial, material and emotional support during the bereavement period is also included. Some think that the spread of *iddirs* has to do with the Ethiopian culture that gives high value to death. Many academics claim that *iddirs* have transformed themselves from burial associations to multifunctional ones as *iddirs* have started undertaking a number of development work, business activities and credit facilities. In accordance with the capacity of the *iddirs* some work on sanitation development in the neighborhood, sharing responsibilities in building smaller infrastructures like feeder roads and sewerage systems, and secondarily good social (neighborly) relations, social control, day cares, schools and the likes. (See Dejene 2003; Pankhurst 2003; Shiferaw 2002; Fecadu 1974; Mekuria 1973). On top of the direct role of the *iddirs* in rendering service to their community, they served also as a pressure group on behalf of the community to the local administration such as the provision of tap water (Markakis 1974). One can say that they are in a way channels of communication between the community and the local authority. Markakis (1974) states that the term ‘elders of the community’ refers in the urban context to the *iddir* officials. Quite a lot of the published documents on *iddirs* are on the same line regarding the fact that *iddirs* have evolved from a monofunctional or limited area of function to a multifunctional network.

Even if Alemayehu (1968) mentions that *iddirs*’ primary function is helping each other in time of trouble, he does not differentiate the functions diachronically. He simply states the social functions as supplementary ones to the support rendered during mishaps. However, he asserts that the aspects that regard the welfare of the community are not integrated in all *iddirs*. His statement would raise the question whether *iddirs* started off principally as burial associations. I will discuss this point later on.

Review of the Studies

Certain factual considerations may give us more insight into the evolution of *iddirs*. With the exception of few academics, most of them agree on that *iddirs* came into existence around the beginning of the 20th century and became widespread during the Italian occupation. In the last several decades not only the numbers have increased but also the types have increased. On top of the commonly known neighborhood and work *iddirs*, *iddirs* of those who share the same place of birth and upbringing which is commonly known as ethnic-based *iddir* have also been well established. I would not use the term ethnic-based as that is according to me a misconception. (I will elaborate this toward the end of this section.) But nowadays there are women's *iddir*, friends' *iddir*, youth *iddir*, faith-based *iddir*, family *iddir*, former schoolmates' *iddir*, etc. (Dejene 2003; Shiferaw 2002).

After the victory of Adwa over Italy in 1896, Menelik started a cautious centralization process. The growing town, Addis Ababa, attracted migrants from the countryside. These migrants were not entirely detached from their family in the rural area. They were not accustomed to the centralized and patron-client system of their new area (Fecadu 1973). Also the autonomy of their respective regions was bartered for the consolidation of the power of the central monarch (Messay 1999; Bahru 1991). This added to the uprootedness due to migration compel them to form a social fiber.

Haileselassie intensified the centralization process in such a way that he ended the duality that existed for centuries between the regional nobilities and the imperial monarchy (Assefa 2005). The centuries old tradition of regional autonomy and national unity came to a grinding halt. Haileselassie refused to recognize the title 'king' for the regional lords but ironically stuck to the title *Nəgusä Nəgäst* (king of kings/the kingdom)³. In this regard, the Constitution of 1931 was the beginning of the end as it paves the way to declare the infallibility of the *nəgusä nəgäst* and his absolute power over the people of Ethiopia (See Messay 1999; Mesfin 1999; Bahru 1991; 1984; Schwab 1979; Markakis 1974). It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that the ever growing centralization measures necessitated the formation of a social fiber like *iddir*. The problematic situations during the Italian occupation too drove people to form small network units in order to survive.

Post occupation Ethiopia was not different from the pre-occupation period. Haileselassie showed no sign of changing his course of centralization (Messay 1999). So, 'people must learn to innovate and to adapt the remnant of the past to meet the demands of the changed circumstances in which they find themselves. Innovation and adaptation always have characterized human behaviour, but now their systematic and intensive application has become requisite to survival.' (Biernatzki 1991:19)

The Derg regime excelled the former regimes in its centralization measures. It built excessive military apparatus to rule the people with an iron fist. Under the disguise of socialism and national unity, the local power was channeled toward promoting the ideology of those in power. No challenge or opposition was tolerated (Assefa 2005). Through the nationalization of land and big companies, the regime destroyed the spirit

³ The author of this article is of opinion that the translation of the Ge'ez *nəgusä nəgäst* as king of kings or emperor is an adulterated translation. The word *nəgäst* has no singular form which means that it could not be the plural of *Nəgus*/king. The word itself is described in Geez grammar as *mādbāl* which means compound noun. So my argument is that the word *nəgäst* could mean the whole complex structure of a nation which I equate with kingdom. Therefore, instead of king of kings or emperor, I would translate it as king of the kingdom. The official translation of *nəgusä nəgäst* as emperor implies that the throne itself assumed this common (mis)understanding of the meaning of the title.

of competitiveness that existed for centuries (Messay 1999). Autocratic and dictatorial moves of the regime alienated the people from authorities. During this period *iddirs* grew not only in numbers, but also in sorts. People sought in the *iddirs* a kind of refuge and a social fiber.

One can see that the political instability and the collapse of a natural social fiber since the late sixties have made people to find ways in which they could give shape to their need for interpersonal and social relations, and belongingness. Even though the operational potential of *iddirs* was limited by the political control, they provided people personal security, a sense of belongingness, an authentic interpersonal relation, a system with which they can identify themselves, etc. Alemayehu (1968:14) states that people likely join an *iddir* to get some love and attention. Some people become members apparently 'to satisfy their desire to belong, which is closely tied to the desire for security. People believe that in belonging they gain security, for in conformity there is comfort and in union, security, real or fancied.'

In this regard Dessalegn (1992) states that informal institutions such as *iddir* have a variety of significance in shielding the individual and family from the intrusion of the state and form a neighborhood solidarity also creating an alternative realm of discourse where the formal structure is criticized, ridiculed or rejected. He further states that the strength of such informal institutions lies in their autonomy and fluidity. In line with Dessalegn I would like to argue that the nature of such associations is more than what their manifest functional aspects (like burial matters) make us think of them. Shiferaw (2002) confirms this in his masters thesis by stating that traditional and indigenous organizations are part and parcel of the coping mechanisms and survival strategies of people.

The claim that the *iddir* started off as ethnic-based association seems to me ideology oriented reading of the reality while the formation was based on area of birth and upbringing. Markakis goes even further by stating that Christians and Moslems have separate *iddirs*. Such a claim is related to the ethnicization discourse. Even a closer look at the pamphlet to which Pankhurst refers would make us think differently. In order to justify that the *iddir* would probably be the initiative of the Gurages, Pankhurst refers to a pamphlet of a Soddo Kistane *iddir*. But what Pankhurst leaves out is that the Soddo Kistanes are one particular sub-group in the larger Gurage ethnic group. Besides, neither he nor the pamphlet to which he refers gives us any further explanation as to whether their forming of the *iddir* was directly related to their ethnic affiliation or to the fact that they were discriminated as merchants⁴. The Soddo Kistane might be the first to establish an *iddir*.

Nevertheless, one cannot conclusively say that they formed the *iddir* because they wanted an exclusively ethnic-based group. Based on this very pamphlet, one can definitely conclude that they formed a group because they were discriminated and given a despicable social status. By ascribing ethnic identity to the formation of *iddirs*, among others, that of the *yehibret minch iddir*, academics have promoted a certain ideology that reads the social reality from an ethnocentric point of view.

Iddirs were founded by those who came from the same area, like *yeselale tewelajoch iddir* (people born in Selale), *Yemecha iddir* (People of Mecha), *Yekembata iddir* (people from Kembata), etc (See Shiferaw 2002). Most of the names of the *iddirs* do not explicitly refer to an ethnic group but to a geographical area. By forming an *iddir* by the

⁴ Until recently merchants in general were despised and had derogatory names like *mechagna nekash*.

name *yeselale tewelajoch*, the very name will allow someone born in *Selale* with a different ethnic background other than *Oromo*, to become a member unless the byelaw explicitly makes it impossible. For instance, in the *Yemecha iddir* you would not find an *Oromo* from *Arsi*, *Harar* or *Wellega*. Membership was exclusively for those who were born and brought up in the *Mecha* area. Children of migrants in the area, particularly those who were an integral part of the community were allowed to join the *iddir* even though they were not from the same ethnic group by blood.⁵

Name of an area could possibly be associated with an ethnic group, but it does not necessarily mean one particular ethnic group. Most of the members and at times all members of such *iddirs* could naturally belong to one ethnic group, but it is in my view not justifiable to label them as ethnic-based *iddirs*. Particularly people from minority ethnic groups might have an *iddir* that has/had members exclusively of their own ethnic group. But this is mainly because most of the minority ethnic groups like the Kembatas, Wolaytas and Dorzes come from an area that is relatively small and homogenous. It was also a common phenomenon that people who came to towns from the countryside would form an *iddir* as they settled usually in one neighborhood⁶. Fecadu (1974) asserts that there was a general tendency that one ethnic group would dominate the membership due to the fact that members of one particular ethnic group settled in one area in the cities till half way through the last century. Thus, while forming a neighborhood association in a homogeneous setting, one cannot expect from the association to be heterogeneous. But it is highly unlikely that they would include someone from another area purely because she/he belongs to their ethnic group. Furthermore, Shiferaw corroborates this with his claim that *iddirs* designated under ethnic and regional name during the imperial period did not exclude others with the exception of some Gurage *iddirs*. Comparing this with the post 1991 reemerging *iddirs* with 'ethnic orientation', he claims that the reemerging ones are strictly exclusive (Shiferaw 2002:51).

I think it is essential to mention how such a discourse arose. Such a reading of social fibers is related to the ethnicization discourse that took ground in the country in the 1960's. Due to the autocratic nature of the Haileselassie regime along with its mainly Shewan inclinations, there was resentment among other Amharas and ethnic groups. The students' movement and the elite sought redemption in a Marxist-Leninist approach by demanding self-determination for all nations and nationalities (Messay 2006; Messay 1999). This ethnicization discourse began in the sixties and reached its climax in the early nineties. Following a Marxist-Leninist discourse the radical elite and students' movements assumed themselves as liberators of the mass (Messay 2006).

Such a discourse constructs an ideology and affects the power relations. By following a Marxist-Leninist ethnic discourse, the students' movement constructed a

⁵ Dejene Woldeyohannes, the father of the author of this article, has been a member of the Mecha *iddir* for years even though he is not at all an Oromo by birth. He was born and brought up in the Mecha area. His father settled there as a child. Their *iddir* was oriented toward solidarity between those who are living there and those who have already left. Their aim was to strengthen solidarity among the people of the area rather than based on their ethnic affiliation which many academics misread as ethnic-based development. According to the information I gathered from Mr. Basliel Woldegabriel, whose father was a member of the Mecha and Tulema -self-help association, which was originally not ethnic-based but oriented toward forming an association for descendants of the Mecha and the Tulema families for the purpose of mainly the development of the area. This association did not have Oromo members from Harerghe, Bale, Arsi, etc. Even not all members were Oromo. (See also Bahru Zewde 1991); Even if all the members would have been Oromos, that does not make it automatically an ethnic based association.

⁶ Names like Gondere seffer, Gurage embassy, Gojjam berenda, Dorze seffer, Tigre seffer, etc. indicate that people from the same area did settle in the same neighborhood.

reality. 'Certain uses of language are ideological, namely those, in specific circumstances, to establish or sustain relations of domination. The ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become naturalized, and achieve the status of 'common sense'.' (Fairclough 1992: 87). Language contributes to the shaping of the social reality and it is, at the same time, determined by the social. As a social practice language is always in dialectical relationship with other dimensions of the social. (Fairclough 1992; 1993). Language determines and is also determined by the relations of power of its users. By choosing certain types of discourse, producers of a text invest in a certain ideology and power relation. The term text refers in this context to written, oral as well as visual ones. Producers of a text draw on certain texts and discourses in a particular way in order to maintain or bring about change in the existing discourse, ideology, power relations and the likes. Consumers of a text too make use of discourses at their disposal to interpret a given text and delimit the meaning among the possibilities of potential meanings.

Accordingly once the ethnocentric discourse wins terrain among the elite and certain political wings, social reality has been read and described from that construct-perspective. A number of the academics doing research in the area of *iddir* and other social fibers have taken this reading without paying attention to its ideological implications. Probably they have deliberately chosen for an ethnicized analysis. That is why *iddirs* have been misread as social networks originally set up out of ethnic affiliations while they were in fact started as associations for people who were born and grown up in the same area.

Many have also described *iddir* as a mutual aid in time of death. To justify their argument they claim that Ethiopian culture puts emphasis on death. Dejene's statement 'the often-disapproved after-death services' (2003, 45) emanates from such a discourse. Even though Dejene states a number of reasons why *iddirs* are becoming ever more popular, his analysis is mainly from a functional perspective. Fecadu (1974: 367) has some nuances in this regard. He states that the 'primary manifest' aim of *iddir* is 'mutual aid in times of misfortune, death, sickness, etc'. He does not limit the aim to death or burial matters but builds it around a number of mishaps. Furthermore, the fact that he uses the phrase, 'primary manifest', could be an indication to not-manifest aims. According to Alemayehu (1968) the function of *iddir* has never been exclusively confined to burial matters. He states that one can postpone marriage for lack of money but burial cannot be postponed. Bearing this in mind, it is not difficult to grasp why death plays a manifest primary role in *iddir*.

But what such an argument does not take into account is that death is an integral part of life. Death, more specifically burial, is a witnessing symbol of the life of the deceased or the family. The more the number of people attends the funeral of a person the more it says about the social relation or in a way the righteous nature of the deceased or his/her family. Expressions like *qebari atasatagn/ayasatah* (May God not deny me/you of people who bury you) or swears like, *meqabereh lai alqomim* (I swear not to attend your funeral) are usually taken literally while their implications are related to interpersonal/social relations in the community. In the former expression lies a tendency of the person to live in peace and friendly terms with the people around him/her. The second expression comes forth out of serious social offence done against a person.

For *iddirs* burial matters are the ones that bind all together. Both rich and poor, young and old, healthy and sick die. As *iddir*'s structural nature is egalitarian, their binding symbol revolves around death which is also non-discriminating. It is not so that

iddirs were/are too concerned with death and burial matters but it is because they deal with death as an integral part of life. By organizing a good funeral ceremony, they keep the life of the deceased in their memory and/or in the memory of the remaining family members. It is not uncommon that people talk in a very positive way about a deceased person if the funeral ceremony is attended by many people, if the weather is good during a burial.

Cultural and theological relevance

The political situation of post-occupation Ethiopia has not been conducive to build on existing cultures. Successive governments have denied Ethiopia to be proud of her history and cultures. *Iddir* is born out of such deprivation. By taking the story that the despised hide and wax traders from Gurage started *iddir* are we not affirming that negative socio-political situation is, paradoxical enough, a fertile ground for social fibers. Lack and deprivation impede human agency. And agency is ‘made possible and sustained only through communal relationship’ (Hollenbach 1989: 92) and is one of the basic essences of human dignity. *Iddir* is a communal and cultural reaction to the unfriendly social, cultural and political order. It is a non-verbal discourse against political hegemony, cultural alienation and national instability. When there are conflicting interests and world views between individuals/groups/regions and authorities, social fibers arise as a means to hold on together. No wonder that the more oppressive regimes become the more diversified smaller units of social fibers have been emerging in the form of various types of *iddirs*. Not all social fibers will achieve in satisfying the need and interest of the deprived, but those that survive the external pressure and bind the people together become part of the culture. Indeed *iddir*, born of oppression, conflict, deprivation and alienation has outlived the regimes and the systems that disrupted smaller units of social mobility. *Iddir* is one of the most significant survival strategies of the (urban) population in Ethiopia (Dessalegn 1999; Salole as cited by Dejene 1993).

Iddir membership is a kind of indescribable education. One learns there the ethos of his/her culture, his/her personal responsibilities, and his/her personality in relation to others. Culture gives people a sense of identity, security and personal esteem. Culture is an instrument with symbols, rituals, stories, world-views that people use to give structure to their lives. (Biernatzki 1991). *Iddirs* are ‘root paradigms’ for the Ethiopian society. Root paradigms are cultural models for behavior. ‘[R]oot paradigm...is probably concerned with fundamental assumptions underlying the human societal bond with preconditions of *communitas*.’ (Turner 1974: 68) *Iddirs* assume also human bond in that their main leitmotif is the well being of the community. Root paradigms provide participants a pattern to structure and regulate their (social) actions at every stage. They give people form and stability to ‘processual units’. In their written and unwritten norms *iddirs* structure the community and determine their (social) actions. At the same time the egalitarian nature and the unmediated relationship between persons which does not in any way submerge one in the other preserve and make realize their uniqueness while realizing their commonness. Such relations do not blend identities but freed them from conformity (Turner 1974: 274).

Their egalitarian nature and their relational function transcend their structure. Their structure attempts to define each member as a separate entity but the ‘anti-structural’⁷

⁷ The term anti-structure is used in Turner’s studies to connote a body that is undifferentiated, equalitarian, direct, extant, nonrational, existential, I-Thou relationships. It is not in the negative sense

characteristic dictates. This is manifest in the social activities that take place beyond what is expected according to the written norms.

Theological Reflection on *Iddir*

The relational and communal aspects of *iddir* could be of significance in linking it to the Christian understanding of the person. The opening pages of Genesis tell the story how God created humans – male and female. ‘Let us make man in our own image and in the likeness of ourselves ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’ (Gn 1:26-27) This story implicates the relational dimension of the human person derived from the first and foremost communal and relational Person – the Triune God – after whose image and likeness he/she is shaped. It is also stated, ‘It is not right that man should be alone.’ (Gen. 2.18) ‘Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.’ (Gaudium et Spes: 12) The realization and fulfillment of personality is achieved only through relation and love of other persons.

The mutual relation that is governing the *iddirs* could be identified as a parallel to the Christian understanding of person in his/her relationality. As stated above *iddirs* are not primarily functional but rather identical (that of identity) in which persons join them to identify themselves with and be identified with them. This could be understood as an extension from defining the person interpersonally. This relationality expresses itself also in the participation of the person in the society, which is a manifestation of human agency. The high level of participation in *iddirs* promotes human agency. This is where the theological and the cultural intersect. This participatory relationality expresses mutual implication of members which in turn results in the ‘common good’ of them.

According to Lonergan (1993) the ‘common good’ has three essential aspects: particular goods, good of order, and value. He said further that it is only one thing that is good by its very essence and that is God. Everything else is good by participation. Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that the discussion will be about the (common) good by participation. This ‘common good’ concerns persons. Participation demands interaction; therefore, the characteristic traits of the person in its relationality plays a significant role in understanding it. In other words, the person is the defining factor of the common good. The ‘common good’ entails primarily of having the social structure and environments on which the human society depends. It is a system in which people work in a manner that benefits all. The ‘common good’ is a good to all members of society and no one is excluded. Or as Maritain (1966: 49-50) puts it, ‘The *common good* is common because it is received in persons, each one of whom is a mirror of the whole...The end of society, therefore, is neither the individual good nor the collection of the individual goods of each of the persons who constitute it.’ (My emphasis) It brings about increase of the whole and the part by being shared. The common good is there to be shared; it grows by being shared rather than diminish. An authentic interpersonal relationship is characterized by mutual interdependence. Such interdependence is the basis for the ‘common good’. Mutual interdependence takes place in freedom to be in relation with.

The realization of the ‘common good’ requires respect for the many different forms of interrelationship and community. This interpersonal relationship is characterized by

but rather a generative center in the positive sense. (Turner 1974: 272-298)

the 'common good' that consists of an ethical life lived in common – a life of justice and love. This undertaking makes it possible for people to realize their good in history because the issue concerns here the 'common good' in a temporal and spatial framework. As a means, it is a historical concept while the ultimate common good can be categorized as the realization of the good in eternity which is communion with each other and with God. Therefore, concludes Hollenbach, the temporal 'common good' as it is attainable in history is pluralistic in nature. Pluralistic in such a way that no one good may be absolutized, but each will have a place within the framework of social existence. . The very fact that *iddirs* are pluralistic makes them compatible with the principle of the 'common good'. Without appealing to any absolute standards, still the principles and thoughts of the *City of God* can lay a theological foundation in identifying the temporal system (politics) as a possible partial embodiment of the absolute common good (Hollenbach 1989:85).

This theological principle of the 'common good' is in line with the underlying principle of *iddirs*. *Iddirs* are there for interpersonal interdependence. Each member benefits from every input; at the same time the *iddir* itself benefits by the individual inputs. Where the social pastoral (common good) and the cultural (*iddirs* in their communal interdependence) touch each other, Christian value and culture can enrich each other.

The Christian principle of solidarity too has a parallel in the *iddirs*. Solidarity uncovers a disposition, buried under the established social and political conditions, toward cooperation, mutual aid, common feeling, therefore toward the common good. It is simultaneously anticipative insofar as it also draws a picture of the future human being, who will ultimately be free to develop its cooperative and common strengths without hindrance. In the *iddir* solidarity is both a means and an end. It is a means in the sense that it is instrumentalized to achieve a certain goal/ the 'common good' of the members. It is an end in the sense that it is the actualization of the association that leans upon its mutual relationship and interdependence. Solidarity is about love and interrelatedness. It is also a manifestation of an aspect of personhood. 'Personhood requires the balance of self-love and self-gift...Personhood is the bridge between ourselves and *everything* and *everyone* else, past, present, and future.' (LaCugna 1991: 290) *Iddirs* are both altruistic and egocentric. Their altruistic characteristic is manifest in the commitment of the members to support the other and in their relationality. Their egocentric nature emanates from each member's aspiration to benefit from them. The balance between the two is a parallel of the balance between the self-love and the self-gift in the principle of solidarity. Solidarity reminds us of the connection we have with the entire humanity regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, sex, etc. and particularly with the deprived. *Iddirs* are solidary within themselves. The fast growth of non-ethnic based *iddirs* is a witness that the society at large transcends ethnic particularism.

Mention was made that *iddirs* came into existence partly because of deprivation, discrimination and oppression. By forming an *iddir* people become solidary with each other and build a buffer to defend themselves from the system. In this way, solidarity must be seen above all in its value as a moral virtue that determines the order of institutions. On the basis of this principle that "structures of sin" that dominate relationships between individuals and peoples must be overcome. They must be purified and transformed into structures of solidarity...' (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004: no. 193).

Final Remarks

So far we have seen that there is enough cultural and theological ground to interrelate *iddir* and certain Christian principles. Even if both church and *iddirs* are close to the Ethiopian society, the two have not encountered each other in a dialogical way. The churches have not yet invested in exploiting the juncture in addressing social, pastoral or theological issues. The Churches are mainly concerned with the spiritual. And their social and development responsibilities are channeled through their own development desks. *Iddirs* are also mostly concerned with their own community with little openness to entities outside of them. Churches have the experience of operating in dialogue with others; they are also by virtue of their Gospel mission, responsible in dialoging with traditional systems like *iddirs*. *Iddirs* can serve as a social space where churches can reflect theologically in order to address social, pastoral and other issues. Even the symbolic significance of *iddirs* can be of inspiration to adopt it in their rituals. When *debteras* developed the *wereb*, they must have taken some inspiration from the traditional folk's music and dance, and of course the traditional way of life. The same is expected from contemporary liturgists and *debteras* and priests.

If both religion and *iddirs* would like to play a significant role in the Ethiopian society, it makes it even more imperative that the churches not only seek cooperation with *iddirs* but also make the symbolic value of *iddirs* the integral part of their pastoral, social and liturgical services. The Good News can only be communicated in an understandable way if it is baptized in the river of the local culture. In such a way it is possible to enrich *iddirs* by theological reflections, and the church would broaden her relevance and address contemporary issues from a Christian perspective through the local optic. As a multi-religious group the *iddir* can also be a good instrument for interreligious dialogue in a country where the religious tolerance and recognition are on the decline. Taking pride on the tradition of the past does not suffice by itself. Ethiopia is defined historically in relation to the present. Churches can no longer pride only of the past. If the past does not become an integral part of the present through which Ethiopians define themselves, it becomes a fairytale. The present is offering itself to be connected with the past just like the 'fusion of the horizon' of churches and *iddirs*.

References

- Alemayehu Seifu. 1968. Iddir in Addis Ababa: A Sociological Study. Ethiopia Observer. Vol. 12, no. 1.
- Assefa Fiseha. 2005. Federalism and the Accomodation of Diversity in Ethiopia: A Comparative Study. Leiden: Sijthoff.
- Bahru Zewde. 1991. A History of Modern Ethiopia: 1855-1974. London: James Curry.
- Bayertz, Kurt (ed.) 1999. Solidarity, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Bevans, S. 1992. Models of Contextual Theology. New York: Maryknoll.
- Biernatzki, W. E. 1991. Roots of Acceptance: The Intercultural Communication of Religious Meanings. Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University.
- Dejene Aredo. 2003 Iddir: A Look as a form of Social Capital in A. Pankhurst (ed.) Iddirs: Participation and Development. Proceedings of the Ethiopian National Conference ACORD. Addis Ababa.
- Dessalegn Rahmato. 1999. The Growth of Civil Society Institutions in Ethiopia. Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa.
- Fairclough, N. 1992a. Critical Language Awareness. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. 1992b. Discourse and Social Change. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Fecadu Gedamu. 1974. 'Urbanisation, Polyethnic Group Voluntary Associations and National Integration in Ethiopia' in *Ethiopian Journal of Development Research* vol.1.
- Hollenbach, David. 1989 'The Common Good Revisited.' *Theological Studies*, vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 70 – 94.
- Korten, D. C. 1972. *Planned Change in a Traditional Society: Psychological Problems of Modernization in Ethiopia*. New York: Praeger.
- LaCugna, C. 1991. *God for Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Levine, D.N. 1965. *Wax and Gold: Tradition and Innovation in Ethiopian Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Loneragan, B. 1993. *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan: Topics in Education*, Vol. 10, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Markakis, J. 1974. *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*. Addis Ababa: Oxford University Press.
- Mekuria Bulcha. 1973. *The Social and Historical Background of iddir in Ottaway*, M. 1976. *Urbanization in Ethiopia: A Text with Integrated Readings*. Addis Ababa University, Dept of Sociology and Anthropology.
- Mesfin Wolde-Mariam. 1999. *The Horn of Africa: Conflict and Poverty*. Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.
- Messay Kebede. 1999. *Survival and Modernization, Ethiopia's Enigmatic Present: A Philosophical Discourse*. Asmara: Red Sea Press.
- Messay Kebede. 2006. 'The Ethnicization of Ethiopian Politics: Origins and Significance.' *Ethiopian Review*, November 30, 2006 via <http://www.ethiopianreview.com> (downloaded 13 December 2006)
- O'Brien, David J. and Thomas Shannon (eds.). 1992. *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, New York: Mary Knoll: Orbis Books,
- Pankhurst, A. 2003. *The Role and Space of Iddirs to Participate in the Development of Ethiopia* in A. Pankhurst (ed.) *Iddirs: Participation and Development*. Proceedings of the Ethiopian National Conference. ACORD. Addis Ababa: CPP.
- Pankhurst, A. and Damen Haile Mariam. 2000. *The Iddir in Ethiopia: Historical Development, Social Function, and Potential Role in HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control*. *Northeast African Studies*. Vol. 7, No. 2, pp 35-58.
- Pankhurst, R. 2001. *The Ethiopians: A History*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pankhurst, R and Endreas Eshete. 1958. *Self-help in Ethiopia*. *Ethiopia Observer* vol. II. No,11.
- Phillips, L and W.M. Jørgensen. 2002 *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. London: Sage.
- Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. 2004. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Cita del Vaticana: Libreria editrice Vaticana.
- Schwab, P. *Ethiopia: Politics, Economics and Society*. London: Frances.
- Shiferaw Tesfaye Mengesha. 2002. *The Role of Civil Society Organization in Poverty Alleviation, Sustainable Development and Change*. A thesis for the degree of Masters in Social Anthropology. (unpublished)
- Turner, V. 1974. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. London: Cornell University Press.

Political Conflicts in Ethiopia – in View of the Two-Faced Amhara Identity

Siegfried Pausewang¹

CUD, a party of the urban Amhara on the political right, claims to speak for all Ethiopians. But peasants of the Southern peoples, conquered after 1850, fear the loss of their cultural independence and the return of the Amhara landlords. A distinction between the rural Amhara and the urban “All-Amhara”, explained by the late Sevir Chernetsov in 1993 as a result of a historical process of assimilation, may help to better understand the political interest conflicts.

Ethiopia is in a deep crisis after the May 2005 elections. The process of democratisation, which made generally acclaimed progress until days before the election, seems to be seriously reversed. Demonstrations and unrest reigned for a long period in many parts of the country, with student demonstrations and violent intervention of police, security and military forces. A majority of the leaders of the largest opposition party, the Coalition for unity and Democracy (CUD), were imprisoned, accused of treason and genocide. They were facing severe prison terms or even death penalties if convicted². It appears that it will take a long time to heal the wounds this process has cut into the nation³.

Behind this deplorable state of affairs is a conflict of two different understandings of reality, which are virtually incomprehensible for each other. CUD won a surprisingly high proportion of votes, unprecedented for a party founded not much more than a year before the election. It sincerely believes it indeed has won a majority, but was cheated for the victory. This conviction is not entirely without reason, though there is little proof to substantiate it. On the other side, EPRDF defends its power, convinced that CUD owes its (relative) success to a misleading presentation of its position, and to dubious alliances. EPRDF is convinced, not without reason either, that a CUD victory would have thrown the country into entirely new conflicts and confrontations, once these internal contradictions would come to the fore.

To understand better this complex and entangled situation, it is useful to read again a series of articles the late Sevir Chernetsov published in 1993 and 1996. on the origin of the Amhara as an ethnic group, and as a nationalist identity in present day urban society in Ethiopia. It is worth while to discuss the consequences of this particular urban identity in present society, because it is an essential foundation of the urban-based All-Ethiopian political alternative to ethnic identities. At the same time, Chernetsov's observations help to explain why this urban consciousness could without challenge assume the representation of all Amhara interests, and implicitly even assume that their

¹ Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen, Norway, email: Siegfried.Pausewang@cmi.no

² At the time of writing, the threat was real. At present, there are indications that they may be released soon.

³ See the debate between Christopher Clapham and Paul Henze in the Internet during 2006.

view represents the political ambitions of the progressive part of the entire population of Ethiopia.

It is all the more puzzling that Sevir Chernetsov's analysis is not reflected in the academic debate at all. It may well be worth to ask whether it is consciously veiled, in the interest of a pan-Ethiopian nationalist elite claiming to represent all Amhara, and even all Ethiopians⁴. Certainly this claim made it easier for CUD to attract protest votes of people frustrated with the present (local) government, who felt that any alternative would be better than continuing along the present patterns of local domination and control.

The Two-faced Amhara identity

Sevir Chernetsov observed that the Amhara, counted as the second largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, are much more populous than what the tiny province of Amhara could possibly be expected to procreate. He showed that this is so, because Amhara was for centuries a culture of assimilation. The language and the culture of the Imperial court was Amharic, since the reign of Yekuno Amlak and the "Solomonic line" of kings emanating from the historical Amhara province. Whoever wanted to advance in the administration, whoever had an ambition for a position in the court or in the military of the Emperors, had to speak Amharic reasonably well. The court retained an Amharic culture, but attracted ambitious individuals and bright young men from other ethnic groups, provided they volunteered to adopt the language and the customs at the court. Usually this also included adopting the Orthodox Christian religion. The culture of the court thus became an ethnic melting pot⁵. Amharic became a culture of assimilation. But it was also a court culture of an elite, and it installed in its bearers a consciousness of superiority. Amharic culture became a symbol of domination over other cultures and tribes. The court elite even justified its superiority over other ethnicities with a mission of civilising the primitive tribes, leading them to a progressive culture and saving them into a superior religious haven.

In the 20th century, the Amhara court culture became increasingly a culture of the educated: those who wanted to advance in administration had to get an education, and those who got an education – in Amharic language – had the best chances of administrative advancement. Thus, Amhara became gradually a language and culture of education and of the educated. And at the same time, it became a culture of the urban elites who became increasingly ethnically mixed.

In my article published in *Varia Aethiopica*, in memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov, published in 2006, I called this double meaning of the term "Amhara" the "two-faced Amhara identity". It tried to show that this double meaning, which is not consciously perceived as a duality, or even may be deliberately veiled, has an important impact in Ethiopian political life today. Little could I know at the time of writing, before the elections of 2005, how central this issue would become during the events after May 2005 and up to present day.

I will not repeat here a description of the two faced identity, nor the arguments for a distinction between urban and rural Amhara identity. The interested reader will find them in the book in Memory of Sevir Chernetsov⁶. I will just recall and summarise those

⁴ See Pausewang 2005: 273, 286

⁵ For a more elaborate discussion see Pausewang 2005 – the two-faced Amhara identity.

⁶ Nosnitsin, Denis and others: *Varia Aethiopica*. In Memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov (1943 – 2005), St. Petersburg 2005, Byzantinorossica.

traits that are important for showing the significance of this distinction in present Ethiopian political debate.

All Amhara or All Ethiopian?

Indeed, the issue became topical in 1991, when the urban elites demanded their participation in the political dialogue and hence in those bodies that were to debate the future political and administrative setup. When EPRDF invited representatives of all ethnic groups to the famous Addis Ababa Conference on Peace and Reconciliation, sixteen years back, one group of urban intellectuals demanded their place in it, who did not want to identify as ethnic group. They identified as Ethiopians, regardless of ethnic origin. But the EPRDF registered them as Amhara, according to their language and cultural identity and to their urban residence in Amhara-speaking cities.

In order to register as a legal political party they had eventually to yield, and to adopt the term “Amhara”. However, to distance themselves from ethnic locality and origin, they called themselves “All Amhara People’s Organisation” (AAPO). They understand themselves as the nucleus of a true Ethiopian nation, above the multitude of ethnic identities, rather than an Amhara ethnic group.

Later, in 1992-1993, a public debate raged in Addis, whether the Amhara were a nationality or not. According to one side in this debate, as advocated by Meles Zenawi and Endreas Eshete, among others, the Amhara are a nation with a territory and a culture as any other ethnicity in Ethiopia, and should take their proper place among them. This interpretation is certainly correct for the rural Amhara in some areas of Ethiopia. The other side, voiced by Mesfin Wolde Mariam, Getachew Haile and others, described the characteristics of the urban assimilated Amhara, and claimed that the Amhara were the nascent Ethiopian nation, and should have the right to live anywhere in Ethiopia, and to represent all Ethiopians, or at least the interests of a future-oriented, integrated Ethiopian nation. The debate could easily have been resolved, had one decided to distinguish the two groups of Amhara. But for different reasons neither side had an interest to make such a distinction.

At the 1994 Conference of Ethiopian Studies in Michigan, Takkele Taddese(1994) described the Amhara as “a supra ethnically conscious ethnic Ethiopian serving as the pot in which all the other ethnic groups are supposed to melt.” The Amhara think and feel as Ethiopians, he claims. They do not distinguish different ethnicities, but try to integrate all into Ethiopia.

In this sense, the Urban Amhara, now identified as a distinct group, had no qualms to assume the role of speaking for all Amhara. They identified their cultural and political views as the Amhara position, assuming a role of leadership. Without much reflection they absorbed and dominated the rural Amhara. And these, in turn, felt taken care of, without realising that many political interests were subsumed which were not really theirs.

Borders between rural and urban Amhara are indeed fluctuating. Many rural Amhara feel pan Ethiopian, and agree to the subconscious supposition that the Amhara are a race of leaders, destined to govern Ethiopia. They have no objections to Ethiopia being or becoming an Amhara state. On the other side, many urban Amhara trace their descent from rural areas of Amhara ethnicity, and see the rural Amhara as their kin whom they support and whose interests they assume to know.

Integration or self-determination?

The development of the Amhara from a nationality among others to a new nationality on a higher level was not unique or seldom in history. The French language, originally a dialect among others in a tiny area in the Isle of France, became a national language in the same way, through the localisation of the king's court. French became a national language in fierce competition with other languages and cultures. And French nationalism was not invented before the French Revolution, long after the French language had, for a period, been spoken all over Europe as the language of the nobility and the royal courts. For Sevir Chernetsov, it may not have been an abstract concept to introduce a distinction between rural ethnic identities and a court language and culture: His own culture gave him a good example. St. Petersburg certainly is not located in an area belonging to the home of Russian culture and language. Yet the present day inhabitants have no hesitation to identify and understand themselves as Russians and to accept Russian as their language.

The same process could not go that far in Ethiopia because the different peoples in the South felt excluded and discriminated against. While even the rural Russians and French participated in the gains of colonialism, in Africa or in Asia, the rural inhabitants of Southern Ethiopia have not forgotten the historical experience of being conquered by Emperor Menilek, during the second half of 19th century. They have not overcome the trauma of Menilek using modern firearms imported from Europe, to crush their resistance. For them, Ethiopia participated in the "scramble for Africa" on the colonisers side, being the only African power to succeed in participating in the partition of Africa into colonial spheres of interest. They still suffer from the deep trauma of being treated as second class human beings.

They experienced being economically exploited, culturally suppressed, and relegated to a kind of sub-human status, by the administration and the nobility from the North. For them, all people who came with Menilek and his administration from the North are considered Amhara. Even if these people came from minority groups, themselves only recently conquered, anyone who served Menilek's administration or received land rights and privileges in their country, was considered Amhara. And rightly or not, they feel they continue to be exploited today, just as they were in the time of the Emperors. This has to be kept in mind if one wants to understand the parties and their conflicts in the election of 2005 and its aftermath.

The opposition parties before the election of 2005

The experience of earlier campaigns (1995, 2000, 2001) taught the opposition that only a cooperation in a solid block of the opposition parties could give them any chance of winning an inroad against EPRDF. Competing against each other, none could win. Indeed, a broad coalition of parties was attempted formed, but broke up when precisely the differences described above prevented some of the Southern groups from continuing the cooperation. Eventually two blocs of parties in opposition to EPRDF formed, both with very general programmes, both avoiding to name the precise cause of their conflict.

CUD was formed in summer 2004 as a coalition of four urban parties. The All Amhara People's Organisation, which had renamed itself as "All Ethiopian Unity Party" led by Hailu Shawel; the newly formed "Rainbow Ethiopia – Movement for Democracy and Social Justice", a party of Addis Ababa intellectuals and businessmen organised around Professors Mesfin Wolde Mariam and Berhanu Nega; the "Ethiopian

United Democratic Party” (EUDP), a merger of several parties around the Ethiopian Democratic Party of Lidetu Ayelew, which had grown out of AAPOs youth wing; and the small “Ethiopian Democratic League”. It was formed as a cooperation for the purpose of winning the election. It could attract substantial support from the urban intellectual and business elites, and got the vocal support of a majority in the diaspora, especially the Ethiopian refugee population in the United States who want to change the present system at any cost. As such, it was for the first time a party constellation which could raise funds to finance a campaign. It got the support of large parts of the non-indigenous population in the small rural towns, especially the wealthier and more educated parts, such as teachers and businessmen. Therefore CUD had little problems in finding suitable candidates to field, even in rural areas. In Amhara region, as well as in the major towns all over the country, CUD could file candidates for every single constituency. And even in many rural constituencies it could attract personalities with substantial local support, such as teachers, to stand as candidates.

The other broad coalition, the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), was more or less the continuation of the party coalition that tried to coordinate the opposition campaigns in the 2000 and 2001 elections, without those parties that joined the new CUD group. Under the alternating chairmanship of Prof. Beyene Petros (Southern Coalition) and Prof. Merera Gudina (Oromo National Council), UEDF continued to coordinate the campaign of the small parties with more or less ethnic background from the South.

In addition, there were several smaller parties running, the most important of them being the Oromo Federal Democratic Movement (OFDM) under Bulcha Demexa, a newly founded party that tried to organise the Oromo discontent with the governing party in Oromia, OPDO (a member of EPRDF), within the federal structure and the Constitution.

The elections of 2005

The emergence of Rainbow gave the urban Amhara opposition to EPRDF a tremendous boost in self confidence, because it developed an organisational capacity and attracted a wide interest in urban circles, and even among the intellectuals and in the business community residing in rural small towns all over the country. AAPO, renamed All Ethiopian Unity Party, under its new Chairman Hailu Shawel, had also felt the wind from behind. The war against Eritrea had made Ethiopian nationalist positions more acceptable again, and debates on the issue of access to the sea, and the Ethiopian demand for a harbour, underpinned nationalistic feelings. Hailu Shawel was quick to join the new coalition on the right, with Rainbow, EDP and others. Being the only one who had a functioning party structure, however limited it was, and a well established membership, he was able to influence the new coalition and to successfully claim the chairmanship.

The CUD brought a new quality into the electoral campaign. It managed to mobilise a tremendous enthusiasm, especially in urban Addis Ababa where people developed a feeling of mastering a secure majority. True to the All Amhara tradition to take their view of political options for the view of the majority of all Ethiopians who care for Ethiopia as a nation, they over-estimated this expectation of success.

The government was initially willing to go as far as possible to make the coming elections as open and free as possible – without losing its grip on power. EPRDF relied on its continued control over the rural areas. It relied on its claim to represent the

interests of the peasantry. As long as the peasants are 80 to 85 % of the entire population, EPRDF believed to be able to afford loosing some seats in the major towns, without endangering their secure majority in the national parliament and the regional parliaments. There was a strong pressure from the international donor community to make the coming elections more open, and EPRDF considered itself able to control the situation even with a more open campaign, and with international observers present.

In Addis Ababa, the CUD campaign took off. CUD had no problem in mobilising candidates, and could compete for all seats both in the national Parliament and the City Council. Also in the other major cities, and in Amhara region, CUD had no problem in competing for all seats at election. Among the Gurage, the ethnic group that is known for its specialisation on trade and its tradition of urban migration, and is the most integrated group, CUD could gain overwhelming support. Even in Oromia and Southern region, CUD was able to file candidates in most urban and many rural constituencies.

CUD euphoria took off when it managed to gather a huge crowd of supporters at its mass rally one week before the election. One day after the EPRDF had brought together over one million people on Maskal square, CUD was allowed to stage its own rally. Though CUD could not, like EPRDF, offer free public transport, have public offices order their employees collectively to participate, and hire busses to bring people in from other towns, CUD could gather a crowd that was, according to most estimates, substantially larger even. Police watched the crowd, but did not intervene. The rally remained peaceful, even when the electricity failed just at the moment when the leaders were to address the crowd over loudspeakers. The word spread, and we have reports that people in rural areas decided that CUD could win: If they could hold such a rally before the eyes of EPRDF, without security forces intervening, then EPRDF must have lost its power⁷.

The shock of May 15

EPRDF had certainly never anticipated that CUD could win more than a minority of the votes and, particularly, of the seats in parliament. It relied on its firm control over its clientele in the rural areas. The first impressionistic overviews from the votes on election day, March 15, must have given the party a veritable shock. In Addis Ababa, the general expectation was a huge majority for the opposition, and the feeling in the public was an euphoria of an election victory for CUD. The EPRDF must have felt its grip on power threatened. The general feeling in Addis Ababa certainly justified the worst fears. When the first results from counting came in, panic seems to have erupted. The counting was delayed in most constituencies in remote areas, and the accumulation of results took more than a month – a period which made any control of the process impossible, and allowed manipulations and rigging of results⁸.

While acknowledging that they had lost all seats in Addis Ababa to the opposition, EPRDF was quick in declaring itself as the winner of the federal elections. But also CUD officially claimed to have won, accusing the government of having rigged the votes and stolen the CUD victory. Leading figures of CUD threatened to take the issue

⁷ For an interesting account of the mood in rural areas at the election, see René Lefort: “Power – *mengist* – and peasants in rural Ethiopia: the May 2005 elections, “ in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45, 2, June 2007, 253-273.

⁸ See the reports of the different observer groups, the Carter Center and the European Union Observer Mission.

to the streets. Hailu Shawel, the chairman of CUD, had already before the elections declared that demonstrations could lead to an “orange revolution” like in Ukraina and Georgia, in case the government should violate transparent and fair elections. But EPRDF had also understood the prospect of an “orange revolution” as a threat. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was quick in declaring an emergency situation for Addis Ababa, banning all kinds of demonstrations for a period of one month. CUD announced demonstrations, but backed out when the government made it quite clear that they intended to use force to prevent any form of unrest or demonstration.

Most probably, most of the leaders of CUD had not expected to win a clear majority in parliament. But the euphoria in the oppositional circles in Addis Ababa was such that people felt over-confident. And Hailu Shawel, the chairman, did not want to loose the momentum. CUD was convinced they had won a clear victory, which was stolen only by fraud and manipulation, particularly in the counting. Indeed the general oppositional feeling in Addis Ababa was supported in this belief by an internal paper from the EU Election Observer Mission that unfortunately was leaked to the opposition. EUEOM had collected from its observers all over the country the results from constituencies where they observed the counting, and where voting station results were publicised. On the basis of these reports, somebody in EUEOM had mathematically calculated that EPRDF would not have received a majority, provided that the reported results were fairly reflecting the overall distribution of votes. The figures indicated that (unless the single constituency voting system worked to CUDs disadvantage,) CUD might have become the strongest faction in parliament, and together with other opposition parties, it could have received a majority.

The paper had two weak points, which EUEOM and its leader Ana Gomes certainly were quite aware of: firstly, the EU observers were distributed in accessible areas along roads, in places with sufficient security and accommodation facilities. But EPRDF had its strongholds precisely in those areas they typically did not reach. So it is likely that an uninhibited counting would have substantially increased the votes for EPRDF when the results from more remote areas were coming in. Second, the calculation of the observers did not take into account the geographic distribution, which could well tilt the balance: In a single constituency voting system, a large number of narrow majorities could outweigh huge oppositional gains in few urban centres.

Indeed, the EU mission itself and its leader, Ana Gomes, never said anything to the effect that the opposition should have won. That would have been against their terms of reference and their mandate. EUEOM criticised concrete events in sharp words, and it said that the delays in counting were casting doubts on the process, and that a total lack of transparency made it impossible to reconstruct the votes and establish reliable results. But the unfortunate leakage of this internal paper gave the government a welcome occasion to discredit the EU observer mission. It accused Ana Gomes of being biased in favour of the opposition, thus dismissing her criticism of human rights violations and flaws in the election, particularly the counting.

The fatal error of CUD

In any case, CUD, and particularly its chairman, Hailu Shawel, were convinced of their victory and determined not to let it slip away. They announced demonstrations, but had to back out as the government threatened an intervention of the security forces. But CUD kept the situation in dispense, waiting for an occasion to bring its assumed majority into a better position. To them, their political views were the essence of

political reason, sanctioned by an electoral majority. The public debate continued to confront the views of CUD against those of EPRDF. There was no third position visible. As in the election campaigns, public debate was essentially polarised between the two. CUD would not consider any third position. It assumed to have received a popular vote and hence a mandate to change Ethiopian politics and to implement its programme. Even if, in their public announcements, most CUD leaders were putting emphasis on implementing changes with public consent, they still firmly believed in a majority mandate for their policies. In this, they felt so confident that they insisted in building a broad coalition, and promised to invite all political groups to consultations. Some envisaged a new national conference of reconciliation.

They did not reflect over how many of the votes received were purely protest votes. In the Southern region and in Oromia, in particular, it would be naïve to expect that a majority of people could adopt CUDs programme and see in it their political solution. Since the new Constitution was ratified, the public debate on articles 39 and 40 had been conducted between EPRDF and an urban opposition. The peoples of the South are not interested in more centralisation. They may want some minor corrections of the federal borders. But for them, the federal structure offers in any case more influence and more independence, more cultural freedom than they have experienced from the central state of the Emperor or the Derg. The majority of peasants want more security of access to land, but not a privatisation of land which would lead to concentration of ownership and eviction of peasants. They have little interest in an Ethiopian harbour. But they know that the only harbour Ethiopia could possibly claim, is Assab. And claiming Assab means war. Likewise, they have hardly any particular interest in Eritrea. But they know that a new round of war against Eritrea would claim the lives of many of their youths who would be the first ones to be recruited and sent to the frontlines as cannon fodder. Sure, the leaders of CUD emphasize that they do not want a new war, but hope to achieve their goals with peaceful negotiations. But they are nationalists, and they would be ready to put force behind their national interests if they feel provoked by another state⁹.

In short, the major political views of CUD can not possibly be the agenda of the rural majority. And it can not be the political programme of the “Southern” peoples, those who were conquered during the 19th century and who for generations felt exploited and suppressed. In Ethiopia as a whole, about 80 to 85 % are rural people, and about 60 to 65 % are non-Amhara and non-Tigre “Southern” peoples.

The rural Amhara are uncomfortably placed in between those two groups. They may feel attracted to the urban Amhara, whom they feel their kin. They may also feel attracted to Ethiopian nationalism, in which they might expect to belong to the “higher culture”. But in terms of material interests they are closer to the rural peoples of the South. Their poor majority has an interest in the protection of their access to land, and the security of this access, rather than in ownership in a Western sense – as advocated by the moneyed urban groups. But they have little access to the urban debate. They can not read urban newspapers, nor are they able to participate in the debates. And few of them have sufficiently reflected political positions to understand that the interests of the urban Amhara do not necessarily represent theirs.

The Gurage, too, are in a double-faced situation in between. The Gurage are known as the most urbanised rural dwellers, with a long tradition of temporal rural-urban

⁹ For more detail see the programmes of the member parties in CUD.

migration, with strong traditions of trade and of other urban businesses. An increasing part of the livelihoods of even rural Gurage comes from urban migration and from remittances. They are closer to urban interests. And they are closest to the urban Amhara, they speak Amharigna and have adopted much of the urban patterns of life. For them, uninhibited access to urban markets and urban culture may feel more attractive than a preservation of their own rural culture. This explains why both in Aamhara region and in Gurageland, CUD securely won the elections.

In all other regions, there is good reason to assume that rural votes for CUD were mostly protest votes. Peasants are dissatisfied with the way EPRDFs local party cadres implement EPRDFs policies, and control the rural population¹⁰. Therefore many of them decided that anything else could only be better. When they understood that there was a party that offered a realistic chance to win, they gave it their vote. Not because they supported its programme, or even knew it, but because they felt time was ripe for a change.

A different motivation for voting CUD was reported by René Lefort from villages in North Shoa: Peasants wanted to know who was to win. They were convinced they had to vote for the winner, otherwise they would be severely punished afterwards. When they saw CUD could rally thousands of unarmed people without the armed military intervening, they believed God had decided that EPRDFs time was over, and voted for CUD.

Indeed, a vote is a vote, also if it is a protest vote. That is one of the weaknesses of electoral democracy: it is not able to distinguish the motives for a vote. In a modern state, any party programme is composed of so many issues and interests and objectives, that it is to some degree accidental which ones overweigh in a voter decision.

In any case, imagining that CUD would have won the election and taken over government, there is no doubt that new conflicts would have broken up as soon as CUD had tried to implement its programme. But there is not either any reason to doubt that CUD would have felt entitled to implement it, as they felt the vote had given them the mandate to do so.

Assuming to represent the views and interests of the majority, made CUD over confident. The urban climate after the election, and the radicalisation of large parts of the urban people, reinforced this assumption. It led CUD leaders to a fatal overconfidence in their strength.

Confrontation or consolidation?

As long as CUD (and the other opposition parties) hoped to correct irregularities and fraud during the election in the review process, they were willing to postpone their demonstrations and their “orange revolution”. But government knew that this hope would soon be frustrated. And government wanted to impress on them without doubt that it was determined not to allow any street action that could threaten its grip on power. It wanted to nib any unrest in the bud, and waited for an occasion. It is likely that the student protest of June 2005 was welcome, if not even provoked, as some indications suggest, to demonstrate preparedness. Police and special forces cracked down on students and on first signs of urban protest. The police opened fire, killed over 30 people, and arrested thousands of students, party leaders, journalists.

¹⁰ For more detailed discussion see Pausewang 2004.

When CUD later understood that their protest against individual election results was futile, and the process of reviews ended with giving the EPRDF back some seats they had lost in the first place, CUD decided to boycott the parliament, as well as the City Council. They had some good arguments, as the government had in the last moment, after the election, brought together the old parliament to amend pertinent laws, making it more difficult for opposition politicians to implement their programme. In particular, the City Council was stripped of important functions, limiting its authorities and depriving it of control over financial resources and security. Still, the decision to boycott was not unanimous. Influential leaders argued that boycott would harm the CUD itself. They thought it was better to exert their influence as much as possible, while preparing for the next round. They thought they had received a mandate, and were obliged to do whatever stood in their power to represent their voters. But a vocal group around Hailu Shawel, the leader of the All Ethiopian Unity Party, the earlier All Amhara party, insisted in the boycott.

Hailu Shawel wanted to go for “all or nothing”. He probably expected that the population of Addis Ababa, backed by the national majority, would not tolerate the reversal of their election decision, and would rise to defend CUD. If he could not directly call for a demonstration or a general strike, and drive people into the bullets of the security forces, he could make life untenable for EPRDF by depriving it of any public support.

But the expectation that the urban Amhara were All Amhara, and that they were the ones to front the interests of the Ethiopian nation, made CUD overestimate its influence. Government answered the boycott by asking parliament to withdraw the immunity of those who boycotted. Thus they were normal citizens, not members of parliament any more. The next step followed logically. CUD initiated cautious demonstrations of protest. Government reacted in escalating the confrontation, arresting thousands of CUD members, students, journalists, businessmen and other supporters of CUD. Almost 200 people got killed in the street riots. The leaders of CUD were arrested and eventually brought to court, accused for treason and even genocide. EPRDF claims that these leaders had provoked peaceful public protest well knowing they would become violent, and speculating on it to paralyse the government. The reference to the “Orange Revolution” in Georgia and Ukraine gave the background to calling it an attempt at toppling the democratically elected government by illegal means. Some CUD leaders were quoted with statements that could be interpreted as trying to turn the mob against the Tigreans as the cause of the problem. Thus they were accused of trying to infuse anti Tigrean hatred and violent mass actions to eliminate the Tigreans.

Prospects for the future

It is unpredictable how Ethiopia will get out of the present impasse. In any case, Meles Zenawi has lost considerable confidence in the foreign community. His image as a democratic leader, maintained even in face of serious criticism after earlier elections, has been badly damaged. There are efforts to negotiate a deal in which the government would drop its accusations and the court cases against the CUD leaders, while these should accept to take their seats in Parliament and in the City Council. So far Meles Zenawi has refused to even consider such an arrangement before a court decision. But most recent reports strongly indicate that the CUD leaders may be released at any time, maybe even during the days of this conference. After the court convicted them as guilty, international protests mounted and the government appears to feel the pressure to be too

strong to resist. Whether the leaders, once released, could manage to rebuild CUD, is another open question.

For a democratic future of Ethiopia, it would be most important that the hitherto silent majority is also represented properly in the political debate, both in parliament, in the election campaigns, and in the mass media. As long as ethnicity has some influence in politics, the Oromo, the Sidama, the Gedeo, and all the other peoples in the South need to be heard. Their historical experience and their different interests can not be ignored. And above all, the interests of ordinary peasants, small family farmers and rural dwellers need to have a word in the political discourse: they are the vast majority of the Ethiopian people.

This will hardly happen as long as both the urban All Amhara, but also the EPRDF, are allowed to assume that they represent the interests of the rural people. The fiction of an all-Ethiopian common ground needs to be punctuated. And also the EPRDF has to end its policies of claiming the loyalty of the peasants, and enforcing their obedience. Even where a strong feeling of being one nation reigns, there are differences in political views. They need to be organised to be given a voice.

The baseless assumption of other groups' loyalty entails a danger of provoking resistance, violence and chaos. Democracy is not possible without proper and free representation of all social and ethnic and other groups, all social interest groups, and all political aspirations and views.

References

- Aalen, Lovise and Siegfried Pausewang, 2001: *Withering Democracy: Local Elections in Ethiopia, February-March 2001*, Oslo: Norwegian Institute of Human Rights (NIHR report).
- Abbink, John, 2000: "The Organisation and Observation of Elections in Federal Ethiopia: Retrospect and Prospect," in: John Abbink and G. Hesselning (ed.): *Election Observation and Democratisation in Africa*, London: Macmillan
- Clapham, Christopher, 1969: *Haile Selassie's Government*, London: Longmans.
- Clapham, Christopher, 2004: "From Haile Selassie to Meles: Government, People and the Nationalities Question in Ethiopia", paper presented at a conference on "Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa" in September 2004 in Bergen, Norway (to be published).
- Chernetsov, Sevir, 1993: "On the Origin of the Amhara", in: *St. Petersburg Journal of African Studies* I (1993), St. Petersburg, pp.97 - 103.
- Chernetsov, Sevir, 1996: "On the Problem of Ethnogenesis of the Amhara", in: Rolf Gundlach, Manfred Kropp and Annalis Leibundgut (eds.): *Der Sudan in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Sudan Past and Present), Frankfurt am Main: Lang (Nordostafrikanisch/ Westasiatische Studien, I), pp. 17 – 35.
- Lefort, René, 2007: "Power – *mengist* – and peasants in rural Ethiopia: the May 2005 elections", in: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 45, 2, June 2007, 253-273.
- Merera Gudina, 2003: *Ethiopia: Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the Quest for Democracy (1960 – 2000)*, Addis Ababa: Shaker Publishing.
- Nosnitsin, Denis and others, 2005: *Varia Aethiopica. In Memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov (1943-2005)*, Saint-Petersburg 2005: Byzantinorossica.

- Pausewang, Siegfried, Kjetil Tronvoll and Lovise Aalen (eds), 2001: *Ethiopia since the Derg. A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance*, London, New York: ZED Books
- Pausewang, Siegfried, 2004: *Local Democracy and Human Security in Ethiopia. Structural Reasons for the Failure of Democratisation*, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA Report No. 45).
- Pausewang, Siegfried, 2005: "The two-faced Amhara identity", in: Nosnitsin 2005, 273-286.
- Taddesse Tamrat, 1994: "Ethiopia in Miniature. The Peopling of Gojam", in: Harold G. Markus (ed.): *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University, September 1994*, Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, vol. I, pp. 951 - 962.
- Takkele Taddese, 1994: "Do the Amhara exist as a Distinct Ethnic Group?" in: Harold G. Markus (ed.): *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies, Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, Michigan State University, September 1994*, Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press, vol. I, pp. 168 - 187.
- Tronvoll, Kjetil and Sarah Vaughan, 2003: *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*, Stockholm: SIDA.

Africanity, African Intellectuals and the Study of Ethiopia: Thoughts on the Relevance of Mazruiana

Seifudein Adem¹

The noted African comparativist Ali A. Mazrui has made some profound and intriguing observations about Ethiopia in his extensive writings on Africa and beyond on issues including what he called Ethiopia's cultural achievements and its racial self-denial. In this essay, I assess Mazrui's contributions to our understanding of these and related issues and examine the broader relevance of his methodologies and approaches to Ethiopian studies.

I. Introduction

A trend is emerging in Ethiopian studies which is one of analyzing the works of Ethiopian intellectuals with respect to the general contributions, philosophies and methodologies of their works. This essay is inspired by the same spirit. It is also to suggest the critical need for broadening the research program to include not only Ethiopians but also non-Ethiopians who have directly or indirectly contributed to the deepening of our knowledge about the country.

Africanity, as used in this essay, refers simply to Africanness. The issue of Ethiopia's Africanity is bound up with the extent to which Ethiopia regards itself (and is regarded by others) as part of Africa. The questions would also include whether Ethiopia's Africanness is geographic and/or cultural and, even more fundamentally, what Ethiopia is and what it is not in the same context.

The African Intellectuals in the title of the essay, also calls for some clarification. No African intellectual outside Ethiopia, with the exception of one or two, has conducted much of a systematic study about the country. That is to say that there are not many African-Ethiopianists, outside Ethiopia, as there are, for instance, Japanese, American, Italian, Norwegian and British Ethiopianists. In fact, earlier generation of Africans had probably done a better job in this regard. But this is ironic as much as it is obvious. The irony is that Ethiopia has long been regarded as a symbol of African unity and even Black freedom. The sub-wording of the title, African Intellectuals, is therefore intended also to challenge our African brothers and sisters to engage in Ethiopian studies. But, I should add, a scholarly work need not necessarily be about Ethiopia in order to be useful for Ethiopian studies, as this short essay seeks to suggest in the following pages, by drawing upon a tiny segment of *Mazruiana*, as the immense and magnificent intellectual output of Ali A. Mazrui has come to be known.

Ali Mazrui has also written on Ethiopia, about his thoughts, observations and reflections regarding the country, which are, in many ways, worth recording. The reasons for this include not only that he is arguably one of the most original, versatile and productive African thinkers but also he has, on occasions, made intriguing and

¹ Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University, PO Box 6000 LNG-100 Binghamton, NY 13902, USA. Email: adems@binghamton.edu

profound observations about Ethiopia. He has sometimes told us inconvenient truth about ourselves. In other words, although Mazrui has not written extensively about Ethiopia, in the same way as other Ethiopianists had done over the decades, he also has contributed significantly to deeper understanding of the country. Even more crucially, his works have powerfully projected a generally positive image of Ethiopia globally, with his unique style of discourse greatly adding to their effectiveness and greater impact.

Few African and non-African academics are widely known in Ethiopia, and Ali A. Mazrui is no exception. On the other hand, Mazrui's own encounter with the Ethiopian intelligentsia is longstanding; what is more, the encounter came about at a crucial juncture in the political history of Ethiopia. In his book *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, Mazrui records this encounter with Ethiopian students as follows: "...I was in Ethiopia in December 1973, a few months before the creeping coup started. I was invited to address the student body. An American colleague came to fetch me from my hotel. We arrived at the University. The students turned up not just in their hundreds but in their thousands. The mass of humanity that was there was surprising for a professorial lecture. When I looked behind me my American colleague had disappeared. The students were singing political songs and he had apparently decided discretion was the better part of valour. I ploughed through this mass of humanity, arrived at the front platform. It was one of the loneliest arrivals of my career because there was nobody there to meet me. I was bewildered, wondering what to do next, and then saw somebody else struggling to come across, accompanied by some other. It turned out he was my host—the professor of political science there. When he stood up on the platform to introduce me he was immediately shouted down. The students were insisting that the meeting had to be under their sponsorship, or it could not take place at all. My colleague asked me, 'What do you think?'. I said, 'If I were you I would let them preside'. He was worried, presumably about the impact of surrender on university opinion of him, but he did capitulate to the situation. What emerged in the course of that address, after students have taken over the chair and given their speeches, was that these were the most radical African students I had ever addressed. They gave me a fair hearing, listening to me to the end, and after that asked questions deliberately intended to embroil me in their own profound and understandable dissatisfaction with the Ethiopian imperial system as they knew it...This was the most direct and most blunt critique of an African government I had ever heard from students anywhere..."²

In general, Ali Mazrui's works could be related to and utilized in the study of contemporary Ethiopia at least in four ways. One is to focus just on what he said and wrote about Ethiopia and dissect and analyze them. Secondly, we can apply his general and comparative observations about other places in Africa and beyond as well as his framework of analysis and adapt them for explaining cultural and socio-political forces in Ethiopia. Thirdly, we can employ his dialectical approach, with its emphasis on paradoxes and unity of opposites, to deconstruct master-narratives which are so common in Ethiopian historiography. In some ways substantial part of Mazruiana can be understood as a search for paradoxes in socio-political realities, for the unity of opposites, and the unmasking of the dialectical relationships between the phenomena of interest. And this is uncommon approach because much of academic discourses seem to

² Ali A. Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), p. 262.

turn a blind eye on paradoxes so as not to undermine coherence of narratives. Finally, we can use any combination of the above approaches simultaneously.

The next section briefly identifies the common themes in Mazrui's discourses about Ethiopia. Section III attempts to apply, in a suggestive way, Mazruiana concepts to the analysis of the relationship between religion and politics in Ethiopia. Section IV introduces Ali Mazrui's controversial and provocative views about Ethiopia's pan-Africanism. Section V asks whether Mazrui is Ethiophobe or Ethiophile. A conclusion would then follow.

II. Ethiopia as a Pioneer

Ali Mazrui finds great fascination in Ethiopia's pioneering role in a number of areas. Ethiopia is where the human species originated; Ethiopia is where the institution of human family began. His fascination with Ethiopia continues. Ethiopia is the only country in Africa which survived the European scramble for Africa; Ethiopia is also the first non-European country to defeat a European power at the Battle of Adwa in 1896; Ethiopia is the only delegate from Africa at the League of Nations; Ethiopia is one of the founding members of the United Nations and was Africa's leading voice there.

The Revolution in Ethiopia in 1974 also exerted a fascination of its own, as it represented something unique in Africa—the only revolution in the continent which closely approximated the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Mazrui put it thus: "Although the differences from what happened in Russia were immense, the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974 was closer to the Russian Revolution of 1917 than anything else that had happened in Africa. Both revolutions overthrew ancient monarchical institutions; both revolutions confronted the opposition of a hostile external world; both of them had to confront hostile Orthodox Christian churches (The Ethiopia and the Russian national churches are both in the Orthodox tradition); both revolutions were followed by immense internal civil conflict; both revolutions were captured by extremely brutal dictators (Stalin and Mengistu Haile Maryam); and both revolutions finally ended with ethnic fragmentation in the body politic."³

Ali Mazrui saw Ethiopia under EPRDF with a kind of bewilderment, but still as a trailblazer. Current rulers of Ethiopia broke two taboos in the 1990s, Mazrui observed: "[One] is the taboo of secession from an existing African state in the post-Colonial era—the independence of Eritrea with the full cooperation, if not enthusiastic blessing, of Ethiopia, of which it was once a crucial constituent province. The Eritrea flag was raised in May 1993 at a ceremony at which the President of Ethiopia was among the distinguished guests. This is the taboo of officially sanctioned 'secession'. [The other] violated taboo is ethnic decentralization by a state which was previously unitary. Having lost Eritrea, the rest of Ethiopia is groping for a federal or confederal constitutional order within which "tribes" would have the kind of ethnic autonomy that African systems of government in the postcolonial era have persistently sought to deny them. This is the taboo of retribalization."⁴

Whether as "the oldest Christian state in Africa," or as "a savior of nascent Islam," Ethiopia has been—and continues to be—a source of fascination for Ali Mazrui. But the paradox Ethiopia poses also does not escape his sharp mind. Some of Ethiopia's

³ Ali A. Mazrui, "The Bondage of Boundaries: Towards Redefining Africa," in Ricardo Laremont and Tracia Seghatolislami eds. *Africinity Redefined: Collected Essays of Ali A. Mazrui, Vol. 1* (Trenton, NJ, Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2002), p. 69.

⁴ Ibid.

paradoxes in the eyes of Ali Mazrui include the political marginalization of Muslims in the country and the issue of so-called Ethiopia's cultural achievement and its racial self-denial. We look at each of these paradoxes below.

III. Religion and Politics

In the public and academic discourse issues about the relationships between religion and politics are rarely brought up for discussions in Ethiopia. Considering realities of Ethiopia, both historical and contemporary, the dearth of discourse about the subject is unfortunate but less astounding. Dominant narratives perpetuate themselves in part by blocking counter-narratives, specially those narratives which question directly or indirectly the privileges status of dominant groups. Not only the political marginalization of Muslims in Ethiopia but also the marginalization of the issue itself should therefore make an intellectually fascinating theme of investigation. Ethiopian historiography says little about the country's Islamic history even when great historians such as Ibn Khaldun find it appropriate to make reference to it.

Emperor Haile Selassie was not only the Head of State of Ethiopia but he was also regarded as the "Defender of the Orthodox faith."⁵ In fact, the Ethiopian Constitution of 1955, the latest of the two constitutions of the Imperial regime, clearly stipulated that Ethiopia was a Christian state, forever to be ruled forever by members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.⁶ Haile Selassie had also said: "We shall not place a Muslim on the throne of a Christian king."⁷ It is clear that for Emperor Haile Selassie, religion was more important than ethnicity since the constitution does not say explicitly that Ethiopia would be ruled forever by members of a single ethnic group. The reason for not saying so explicitly may also have to do with the general conception, particularly among the elite, that for all practical purposes, ethnicity is not a salient factor in contemporary Ethiopian politics.

Although even conservative estimates put the proportion of the followers of Islam in Ethiopia as roughly half of the total population,⁸ no Muslim had been given or attained a preeminent position in modern-day Ethiopia. John Markakis, the scholar and long-time observer of Ethiopian society, was exaggerating a little, but he was basically right when he observed: "In imperial Ethiopia it was easier for a non-Christian, who also did not speak Amharic, to pass through the eye of a needle than to enter the charmed circle of power and privilege."⁹

It is significant that even Ethiopia's rulers had not denied that Muslims are politically marginalized. What they take issues with is why this was so. Responding to a question in the UN General Assembly as to why Ethiopian Muslims who were sizable in number were not proportionally represented in the government, the Ethiopian head of delegation had said as early as about thirty years ago: "...if more Ethiopian Muslims did not take part in the administration of their country, it was because they preferred to devote themselves to commerce."¹⁰

⁵ *Africa Research Bulletin*, January 1965, p. 232.

⁶ Hagai Erlich, *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia: Islam, Christianity and Politics Entwined*, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 2007), p. 101.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸ For the latest figures see for instance CIA's, *The World Factbook*, 2007. Internet Source: <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/et.html#People> (Accessed 4/25/07)

⁹ John Markakis, *National and Class Conflict in the Horn of Africa* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 274.

¹⁰ Mentioned in E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *Ex-Italian Somaliland* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 322.

In one of his earlier works, Ali A. Mazrui had this to say about the relationship between Islam and commerce: "Trade and Islam have been companions throughout, with the crescent following the commercial caravan, the muezzin calling believers to prayers from the marketplace."¹¹ The historical evidence about Ethiopian Muslims does indeed support Ali Mazrui's observation. J. S. Trimingham also observed: "The spread of Islam [in Ethiopia] as elsewhere in Africa was facilitated above all by commerce. The Abyssinian [read: Amhara] is a warrior or a peasant and despises trade, consequently Muslims controlled all trade from the markets of the great towns to the smallest way side market, whilst all imperial trade connexions were with Muslim countries through the Muslim trading settlements along the coast."¹²

But there is nothing in the above characterization which suggests that Muslims were inherently averse to politics and public administration. The marginalization of Muslims in the political affairs of the country is instead a result of a well-thought, systematically-pursued policy of the Christian rulers of Ethiopia, a policy that has a clear historical link to the past. As Trimingham recorded about the situation in the 19th century Ethiopia: "Muslims, while they could develop commercial activities, were excluded from public and magisterial posts and from any part in the political life of the country, and clearly divided from the ruling caste."¹³ Historian Hagai Erlich has also the governments' policy towards Muslims in Ethiopia as "a mixture of suspicion, exploitation and patronizing tolerance."¹⁴

What was the state of relationship between religion and politics in the post-Imperial Ethiopia? Marx saw all religions as opium of the masses. But Ethiopia's revolutionary leaders had a different idea although initially they had given the impression that they were going to treat all religions equally. One official document put it at the time: "Islam is more anti-revolutionary than the Christian church."¹⁵ Muslims were generally unable to make it to the highest rank of government under the Dergue regime as well.¹⁶ Political marginalization of Muslims also persists under the EPRDF government which took the reins of power in 1991. It is debatable, however, whether a conscious government policy is playing a part at the present time. But it does not matter in any case since the structure which perpetuates such inequality has already naturalized.

It is one of the distinctive characteristics of Ali Mazrui's scholarship on Ethiopia that he does not show avid interest in the issue of political marginalization of Ethiopian Muslims. Neither does he dwell on the subject, also in keeping with his approach as a macro-historian and his conviction as a true pan-Africanist.

Mazrui writes and speaks about the Christian heritage of Ethiopia as its Islamic heritage with great pride. Even when he suggests some radical measures in relations to the religious dimension of Ethiopian politics, his intention was the betterment of and peace in the Horn of Africa. He argued recently: "On the politicization of religion, the Horn of Africa has its contradictions. Ethiopia had a theocratic tradition for more than a thousand years—with the Orthodox Church as an established Church, and the Emperor as both allied to the Church and revered as the anointed of God. Yet today the Ethiopian authorities do not want the Somali people to experiment with a theocratic

¹¹ Ali A. Mazrui, "Black Africa and the Arabs," *Foreign Affairs*, April/July, vol. 53, no. 4. 1975, p. 737.

¹² J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in Ethiopia* (London: Frank Cass, 1976), p. 113.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 136

¹⁴ Erlich, *Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia*, p. 25.

¹⁵ *African Contemporary Records*, 1984-1985, p. B223.

¹⁶ For some comparative facts see Chris Cook and David Killingray, *African Political Facts since 1945* (New York; facts on File, 1991), p. 63.

solution to their problem of anarchy even for a single decade, let alone for a thousand years. Ethiopian troops intervened in Mogadishu to shut out the stabilizing experiment of the Union of Islamic Courts.”¹⁷

One of the points Ali Mazrui stresses in his well-known TV documentary, *The Africans*, is that “Ethiopia was introduced to Christianity in the fourth century of the Christian era—that is to say, before England was Christianized.” This may be an obvious fact, even though it is sometimes ignored. But one does not expect such evocative reference to Christianity if Mazrui’s analysis was biased in favor of his own Islamic faith. It is a common strategy in political and academic discourse that one omits/erases a historical fact, if not doing so appears to undermine one’s politics or analysis.

Mazrui’s well-informed and balanced approach to the two religions appears more clearly in one of his recent writings: “Ethiopia was the first point of arrival for Christianity in Black Africa. The Christian Gospel arrived in Abyssinia in the fourth century of the Christian era. Ethiopia was also the first point of arrival for Islam anywhere on the African continent. This occurred while the Prophet Muhammad was still alive and before his migration to Medina (the *Hijra*) in the year 622 [C.E.]. It might therefore be said that Africa’s two parents of wisdom first communicated with each other on Ethiopian soil. Muslim refugees were given asylum by an African king. The Muslims at that time were being religiously persecuted in Mecca by pre-Islamic Arabs. The Muslims crossed the Red Sea into the welcoming embrace of Black Ethiopia.”¹⁸

Mazrui’s works give us food for thought about how to approach the complex relationship between religion and politics in Ethiopia. His comparative studies of the subject in relations to Nigeria, the Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Senegal are particularly instructive for framing discussions on this subject. So also are his concepts of religious state (theocracy), religious nation, secular state and ecumenical state as well as the notions of religious alternation and the sacred calculus.¹⁹

IV. Ethiopia and Pan-Africanism

Ali Mazrui recognizes Ethiopia’s role as a “Pan-Africanist icon” and as a “stimulator of Pan-African imagination.”²⁰ Mazrui spelled out in detail Ethiopia’s role as stimulator of Pan-Africanism in 2004 in a lecture he gave at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa: “Ethiopia was the longest surviving Black sovereign state, causing many colonized Black people to look to Ethiopia for inspiration...”²¹

However, Mazrui also underlines that Ethiopia was not a natural-born pan-Africanist. In 2005, he again succinctly put what he meant in this way: “It is one of the ironies of history that this reluctant stimulant of Pan-Africanism in others should subsequently invite others to build Pan-Africanism on its soil. It was not a case of Ethiopia choosing

¹⁷ Ali A. Mazrui, “The Cumulative Exceptionalism of the Horn of Africa: From Inter-Faith Contacts to regional Integration”, Keynote Address, UNESCO’s Greater Horn Initiative, launching Conference, Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti, November 12-15, 2007, p. 9.

¹⁸ Ali A. Mazrui, “Africa’s Wisdom Has Two Parents and One Guardian,” Unpublished Paper, 2004.

¹⁹ For the latest application of these concepts see Mazrui, “The Cumulative Exceptionalism of the Horn of Africa,” p. 13.

²⁰ Ali A. Mazrui, “Liberia and Ethiopia as Pan-African Symbols,” *Liberian Studies Journal*, vol. XXII, no. 2, 1997, pp. 192-193.

²¹ Ali A. Mazrui, “Pan-Africanism between Globalization and the American Empire,” Address to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, delivered at the Institute in Addis Ababa on July 25, 2004, chaired by Dr. Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis, the Institute’s Director.

pan-Africanism. It was a case of Pan-Africanism choosing Ethiopia. Such was Ethiopia's inevitable destiny."²²

But Mazrui's controversial position about Ethiopia's Pan-Africanism is not new at all. As early as twenty or so years ago he had observed: "...it was the emperor himself who initiated the policy of re-Africanizing Ethiopia as the rest of Africa approached independence, fearing to be outflanked by the radicalism of Nasser of Egypt and Nkrumah of Ghana... Emperor Haile Selassie initiated the re-Africanization of Ethiopia."²³

Ali Mazrui revisited the issue in 2007 at some length in a keynote address he gave at a Cornell University symposium on Ethiopia. In the audience were also some of the leading Ethiopianists, both Ethiopians and non-Ethiopians. Not surprisingly, the post-speech Q & A turned out to be lively and heated.²⁴ To say that some were infuriated by Mazrui's observation would not also be an overstatement. The line in Mazrui's speech which didn't particularly go down well with some, it seems, was this: "Objectively, Ethiopians were a Black people, but subjectively they were in denial about their Blackness until Emperor Haile Selassie redefined their identity in the twentieth century."²⁵ In my judgment, Mazrui's critical remark was rather mild; there was no doubt that if he had wanted to be harsher, he could have easily found more scathing words, and evidence too, to substantiate his observations. But on the same occasion, Mazrui said: "Ethiopians were a Black people who could successfully refute Western allegations that Black Africans were incapable of making history, of writing poetry, of philosophizing, or of pursuing the scientific method."²⁶

One could grasp and more fully appreciate Mazruiana if we try to relate its unique approach to the analysis of history. Using Mazrui's aforementioned remark at Cornell University, let me further elucidate what I mean. Ali Mazrui seems averse to binary analysis—his categories often come in doubles and triples, but they come in the form of "both-and" and rarely in "either-or" form. In contemporary intellectual climate where binary division and excessive concern with political correctness is regarded as important sign of rigorous analysis, it is no easy task to bring contradictions out to the open. Mazrui does not believe in slogans such as, to borrow one from President George W. Bush, "you're with us, or you're against us." Mazrui deeply distrusts easy political and intellectual dichotomies. Mazrui seems to be ready to say, in response, for instance, to the infamous phrase, that: "you can be with us, and you can be against us—at the same time."

²² Mazrui, "Pan-Africanism," p. 5.

²³ Ali A. Mazrui, *The Africans: A Triple Heritage* (Boston & Toronto: Little Brown: 1986), pp. 37-38.

²⁴ For a news report about Mazrui's controversial statement regarding Ethiopia's cultural achievement and racial self-denial see, Amanda Wheat, Experts Weigh-In on Ethiopia, *The Cornell Daily Sun*, April 23, 2007. Source: <http://cornellsun.com/node/23087/> Accessed April 23, 2007.

²⁵ Ali A. Mazrui, "Images of Ethiopians in Religion, Politics and Culture: From the Mueezin Bilal to the Opera 'Aida'," Keynote Address to the International symposium on "Imaging Ethiopia: Monarch and Modernity," sponsored by Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, and the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, April 20-21, 2007, p. 1.

²⁶ Ibid. This argument of Mazrui, specially the part dealing with history, was earlier articulated in a slightly different context at least as early as 1977 in relation to the old European attempt to portray Africa as a place devoid of history before the coming of Europe. This line of reasoning which Mazrui was trying to challenge is captured in Hugh Trevor-Roper's assertion, quoted by Mazrui, that: "Perhaps in the future, there will be some African history... But at present there is none; there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness... and darkness is not a subject of history." See, Ali A. Mazrui, "The Warrior Tradition in Modern Africa: Introduction," *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, XIII-1-4, 1975, p. vi.

In the above keynote address, Mazrui first affirmed Ethiopia's cultural achievement. And that elated some Ethiopianist historians in the audience. But Mazrui also articulated his notion of Ethiopia's racial self-denial, which infuriated the same Ethiopianists. Mazrui's keynote was thus followed with a series of attempts from Ethiopianists to challenge—and even discredit—Mazrui's thesis on Ethiopia's racial self-denial. In retrospect, it seemed, the critics were quite well-prepared for their multi-pronged assault particularly since Mazrui's paper was distributed well in advance. That this was the case becomes clear from the nature and type of questions raised and from those minute factual details only mentioned in the paper. Various techniques were used to challenge Mazrui's facts and interpretation from every conceivable angle.

As a seasoned debater, Mazrui also refused to budge even a little under the constant fire of his critics. With "empirical facts" and relevant historical details, Mazrui, indeed, began to fire back more forcefully. It was actually as if he had anticipated such a challenge and kept some of his most powerful arguments for the right moment. Realizing, apparently, that they began a battle which they could not possibly win, the critics had to shift their focus. They claimed because Mazrui was not proficient in Ethiopian languages, he could not speak authoritatively about such a contested issue as Ethiopia's racial self-denial. Other critics pointed out that Mazrui's observations were expressed in poetic phrases as if eloquence and profundity are natural enemies. The critics, apparently, have not realized that it was a long while ago that Mazrui became famous for being "incapable of writing a dull paragraph."

As much as Mazrui would not seek to expunge inconvenient truth about Ethiopia's pan-Africanist history, he does not also dwell on the problematic aspect of Ethiopia's link to Africa. Not only does Mazrui portray Ethiopia's contemporary Pan-Africanism in positive light, he even thinks it should play a greater regional role in Africa. He discusses this theme, among other works, in his *The Bondage of Boundaries*, in which he foresees a scenario of: "Ethiopia as an administering power on behalf of the United Nations, to help nurture the sovereignties of its small neighbors, Somalia and Djibouti being the most likely to need that kind of help in the decades to come."²⁷ Mazrui went on to say: "Ethiopia was once a Black imperialist power, annexing neighboring communities." And then he concluded by asking two rhetorical questions: "Does the future hold a more benign, and even more humane, imperial role for Ethiopia? Will Ethiopia continue its destiny as Africa's pioneering laboratory?"²⁸

What is remarkable here is that Mazrui carves a greater role for Ethiopia in East and North East Africa than for its giant neighbor, the Sudan, or even his own country of birth, Kenya. Had it not been for the favorable attitude with which he views Ethiopia, Mazrui would have simply dismissed the country as unstable and economically weak. But he was optimistic that Ethiopia could eventually overcome challenges of instability and underdevelopment.

Causing uproar in some circles, Mazrui went as far as arguing that Ethiopia, as one of the pivotal states of Africa, ought to re-colonize and pacify its more unstable neighbors.²⁹ When Ethiopian forces made an incursion into Somalia in December 2006, some saw this as the benign re-colonization Mazrui had advocated. But it was clear that Mazrui had also explicitly warned Ethiopia, in November 2001 in an interview he gave to *Ethiopian Reporter*, against playing Pakistan in the Horn of Africa—a situation

²⁷ Mazrui, "The Bondage of Boundaries," p. 69.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ali A. Mazrui, *Tale of Two Africas* (London: Adonis-Abbey, 2006).

which, according to other observers, was represented by Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia.

V. Ali A. Mazrui as Ethiophile

We have touched upon above few controversial issues Ali Mazrui has raised over the years about Ethiopia. But does Mazrui harbor anti-Ethiopian sentiment? To put it slightly differently, is he an Ethiophobe, or is he an Ethiophile? The answer to this depends in part on how one defines Ethiopia. One careful definition separates biblical Ethiopia from historical Ethiopia, the homogenous Ethiopia from the heterogeneous Ethiopia which came into being a little more than a hundred years ago. Admittedly Ali Mazrui does not make the distinction between biblical/historical Ethiopia and "modern" Ethiopia and he rarely highlights the contested dimension of the concept of Ethiopia—and this may have to do both with the demands of his historical approach as well as his pan-Africanist ideology.

Another definition of Ethiopia disaggregates the peoples of Ethiopia from its governments. One can loathe the government but show affection for its peoples, its cultures and its histories.

Ali Mazrui takes pride in Ethiopia's symbolism as the origin of human species, its glorious past and its Pan-Africanist role. But he is also not uncritical admirer of Ethiopia, both modern and historical. As indicated above, one could love a country and respect its institutions, but sometimes the two are not inseparable, as pointed out above. On occasions, a situation could arise in which only a single choice had to be made. This seems to be exactly what happened to Ali Mazrui on the eve of the Ethiopian Revolution. The long quote below captures such a dilemma in his own words, and how he resolved it: "The last time I saw Emperor Haile Selassie was in Africa House in Addis Ababa. The meeting was that of the International Congress of Africanists (later renamed the International Congress of African Studies). The Congress had asked me to propose the vote of thanks to the Emperor after his speech opening the Congress. Ethiopia in 1973 had a severe famine which was under publicized, seemingly because a famine of such magnitude was considered by the Royal Household to be an embarrassment to the empire. And yet, there we were in Addis Ababa from different countries of the world about to begin a congress on issues of development in Africa. Could we hold such a congress in a country with large-scale starvation without referring at all to those who were starving? Were we obliged to spare the dynastic empire embarrassment, in spite of the fact that Ethiopia as a nation-state had responsibilities to alleviate the suffering of the masses? Could we expect our Ethiopian colleagues to discuss the famine in the face of the apparent ban on publicity of the famine at the behest of the Ethiopian palace?"

In that assignment to propose a vote of thanks to His Imperial majesty I felt an obligation to try to solve the conflict between courtesies of a dynastic empire on the one hand, and the obligations of a modern nation-state on the other. In my vote of thanks I therefore mentioned the unmentionable—the famine. I championed what was not to be championed—an open discussion of the famine at the congress as part of our deliberations. I argued the ultimate sin of all—that the congress itself should establish its own internal fund to raise at least a symbolic contribution from its own participants towards the alleviation of the suffering of the Ethiopian people."³⁰

³⁰ Mazrui, *The Africans*, pp. 269-270.

As a true friend, Mazrui was deeply involved in raising funds for the victims of Ethiopian famine of 1986. At about the same time he was also encountering problems of movement and censorship in Ethiopia during the filming of his most famous TV documentary, *The Africans*. Ethiopia's military regime had wanted to make sure that scenes which would put it in a negative light wouldn't be filmed.

The documentary devotes significant portion of different episodes to Ethiopia, and presents Africa—and Ethiopia—in a positive light, but without being one-sided or distorting. Mazrui's artistic and intellectual intervention in the form of *The Africans* was particularly significant due to the fact that one did not come across such erudite African voices saying positive things about Africa—and primarily to a Western audience. The documentary was seen as disruptive of the prevailing dominant discourse about Africa in general so much so that some powerful individuals and organizations in the West tried to block its airing or limit its reach. However, Mazrui himself believed his documentary would help the West understand Africa more fully. In his own words: "People should have a context when they hear about riots in South Africa or a military coup in Nigeria or drought in Ethiopia. The series is partly an effort to provide a human context for the things Americans hear about on television news every night."³¹

The role of *The Africans* was significant in relations between Ali Mazrui and Ethiopia mainly because of what he says in it about Ethiopia. Around the beginning of episode 3, for example, Mazrui declares the following: "Ethiopian scholars were reading and writing before England was taught the Latin alphabet by the Romans." In another episode, he tells his viewers: "It is one of the ironies of nature that Ethiopia, which is so prone to drought, should, at the same time, be the birthplace of one of the great rivers of the world...Ethiopia has contributed to Egypt's survival through the waters of the Nile." And then he relates, "It is said that the genius of Black civilization does not consist building high, it consists of building deep...in this part of Ethiopia [referring to Lalibela's sunken churches in Northern Ethiopia], nature has built high, man has dug deep...these excavations, these constructions are a miracle in their own right, a grand design of both African values and universal significance."

Again, the super impact of the documentary itself can be meaningfully appreciated only if one considers the incredible attention it attracted both from the electronic and print media in the United States and around the world.

The Africans set off sharp reactions from different political circles. A chorus of disapproval came from such people as Mrs. Lynne Cheney, the wife of the current Vice President of the US, Dick Cheney, but at the time Chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.³² Among others, strong support for the documentary came from Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts who summed up his view about *The Africans* as follows: "It is a series that has sparked a great deal of discussion and controversy. While I cannot endorse all of the conclusions...its showing has provided the American people with an all-too-rare look at Africa from an African perspective."³³ Senator Kerry was, of course, a US presidential candidate in 2004 who narrowly lost to George W. Bush. Distinguished academics such as Edward Said also came out in support of *The Africans*. In his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said devotes a

³¹ See "Mazrui: 'My Life is One Long Debate,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, October 6, 1986.

³² See Irvin Molotsky, "US Aide Assails TV Series on Africa," *Washington Post*, September 4, 1986.

³³ See *Congressional Record* No. 1444 (Part III), October 17, 1986. [From Ali A. Mazrui, Extracts from Reviews of Writings, No Date.]

long passage to Ali Mazrui, whom Said respectfully refers to as “a first-rank academic authority.”

Edward Said’s laudatory paragraph about Ali Mazrui in part reads: “...for the first time in a history dominated by Western representations of Africa, an African was representing himself and Africa before a Western audience, precisely that audience whose society for several hundred years had pillaged, colonized, enslaved Africa...”³⁴

Nearly twenty years after *The Africans*, another documentary appeared in the United States, with the title of *Wonders of the African World*. It was created and narrated by the African-American Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr. After the documentary was aired, a debate ensued. And Ali Mazrui was at the center of it again. One of the issues of disagreement between Mazrui and Gates related to how Ethiopia was portrayed in the *Wonders of the African World*. Mazrui expressed his displeasure: “I was so afraid that Gates’s fourth program would be insulting to Ethiopia that I was relieved that it was merely disrespectful. I wished he was more politely dressed when he was granted an audience to a major religious leader. I wished he kept his sarcasm about the authenticity of the Covenant in check. I wished he did not make as many snide remarks which trivialized other people’s values. I wished viewers were not kept informed on camera as to how many car breakdowns he had had.”³⁵

The above remark by Mazrui also prompted the Harvard historian, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., to respond: “Mazrui chides me for interviewing the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church wearing a T-shirt. The shirt bears an image from one of the holiest sites in Ethiopian Christendom. Nevertheless, I myself apologized to the patriarch on camera for my inability to return to my hotel to change after shooting another scene earlier that morning. He accepted my apology and we moved on...”³⁶

The exchanges about *Wonders of the African World* also involved renowned personalities including the Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka and other academics from the United States even though their debates were not about Ethiopia. The point here is not who had a point and who didn’t have, but it is that the sensitivity Mazrui shows to Ethiopia’s portrayal is unmistakable and this in itself is a reflection of his deeper respect for the country.

It was only fitting and significant that Ethiopia’s pioneering institution of higher education and my own Alma Mater, Addis Ababa University (formerly known as Haile Selassie I University) should bestow upon Ali Mazrui a Doctor of Letters *Honoris Causa* in 2004, in the presence of the Ethiopian Head of State, President Girma Wolde Giorgis, for his “seminal contributions to the study of Africa and [his] valiant struggles as citizen to promote Pan-African ideals.”³⁷

But the bestowal of such an honor could have also been easily justified in consideration of Ali Mazrui’s contribution to Ethiopian studies. For sure Mazrui’s contribution to African studies dwarfs the attention he was able to give to Ethiopia. And yet the attention he gave to Ethiopia dwarfs that of other African intellectuals. He can also easily compete with many Ethiopianists if not by volume of his writings on

³⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), p. 38.

³⁵ Ali A. Mazrui, “‘Wonders of the African World’ By Henry Louis Gates, Jr.: A Preliminary Critique of the TV Series,” in Alamin Mazrui and Willy Mutunga, eds. *Race, Gender, and Culture Conflict: Debating the African Condition, Mazrui and His Critics, Volume I* (Trenton, NJ and Asmara: Africa World Press, 2004), p. 356.

³⁶ Henry Louis Gates, Jr. “A Preliminary Response to Ali Mazrui’s Preliminary Critique of ‘Wonders of the African World’”, in Mazrui and Mutunga, *Mazrui and His Critics*, p. 368.

³⁷ Addis Ababa University, *Convocation to Confer Honorary Degrees*, 24 July 2004, p. 6.

Ethiopia but definitely by level of impact he has had in projecting positive image of Ethiopia world-wide. In any case it is perhaps time for Ethiopia to create a class of national awards for eminent foreign personalities who have shown friendship and solidarity with Ethiopia and/or contributed to Ethiopian studies. This was the kind of honor, for instance, which was bestowed upon Ali Mazrui by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa in April 2007. The South Africans call it the Grand Companion of Oliver Tambo Award. Of course, Ethiopia is not South Africa. But given that there are many foreign nationals who, for various reasons, have chosen to devote their time and resources to the study of Ethiopia, the creation of such an award would be only appropriate.

VI. Conclusion

There is a growing interest, it seems, among scholars of Ethiopian studies not only to study Ethiopia from a variety of perspectives but also to study how others studied the country. The trend needs to continue and broaden further. One of the merits of such approach is that it enables the granting of due recognition to outstanding contributions to Ethiopian studies. It also could entice and stimulate others to engage in more active research about Ethiopia.

Only a small portion of Ali Mazrui's corpus deals with Ethiopia. And yet he is arguably the only African intellectual outside Ethiopia to seriously engage the country in the last quarter of the 20th century. The level of impact his scholarly works about Ethiopia have had and continue to have on a wide range of audience and readership greatly offsets the limited attention he had to give to Ethiopia. There are also numerous concepts in the extensive works of Ali Mazrui which have greater utility for a better understanding of politics and cultural forces in Ethiopia.

Prestige is the Argument: Ideas of Power and Development Aid in Ethiopia

Tsehai Berhane-Selassie¹

Historically, Ethiopians exercised the right to challenge injustice. With a *charitable spirit* encompassing respect and compassion at its centre, this right contradicts the ‘modern’ practice of giving and receiving resources in a *competitive spirit*. Explaining how the development process in Ethiopia altered the sense of power relations between ordinary people and those giving aid, this paper illustrates this change with reference to a self-help scheme that was negatively affected by the dominance of state and international non-governmental organization views.

Ethiopian traditions of power relations

The paper hypothesizes that misunderstanding Ethiopian traditional views on power relations has affected development, particularly as a process of equitable use of resources. In pre-modern Ethiopia, the weak managed their resources, land specifically, through continuous negotiations of power. The tensions in domination and subordination were relieved with a charitable sense of rights and justice acceptable to all concerned. Regardless of their social, political or economic status in fact, political authorities were expected to relate to others as equals – the emphasis being on the overriding dignity of being human. Even in the politico-economic arena (Clapham, 1988:22), the dominant were morally expected to relate to their subordinates with a sense of respect and compassion. This refers to *hazeneta*². A word conveying the multiple meanings of sympathy, empathy and a feeling for humanity in a universal sense, it gave a sense of prestige to the powerful.

The traditional ideas of such power relations are still extant in an array of mutually beneficial social relationships. These include associations for work (*debo*, *wenfel*), credit (*equb*), burial (*edir*) and religion-based socializing (*mahber*). At the core of all of them is a sense of welfare, mutuality and catering for the membership. Members relate to each other with the same sense of equality as has just been mentioned. Membership tends to be exclusive to neighbourhoods, localities of origin, or, in the case of the *mahber*, to devotees of specific saints. Though membership numbers vary, they also share common organizational principles, including concerning financial and material input (as in *equb*). In self-help schemes, giving and receiving of resources operate through forging relationships that ensure equality. Though the ideas in these schemes enable individuals to challenge the strong in managing resources in the pre-modern social order, they have no coherent and wide-based organizational structures.

¹ Currently Tsehai lectures occasionally in Social Anthropology at Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick, Ireland.

² For the legal adjudication sense of this spirit, see Abera Jembere, 2000:32-33.

In the power politics of the pre-modern state, society used these ideals to relate to the powerful around land, the means of the economy to which all had access. During the 'modernity' process, the political structure of the state failed to institutionalize its administrative systems, and land too was less central to the state's economy. In the contemporary institution-based development, aid has replaced land, and this paper attributes the disempowering of the poor to the legal changes that have supported the transition. Some of the enduring legacies of the traditional ideals conflict with the unequal relations between donors and receivers. They challenge the almost alms giving spirit with which donors bring inputs for processes that they specify and expect to result in competitive use. Besides, government feared the emergence in the 1960s of welfare-oriented 'associations for mutual help' (*meredaja mahber*)³. These remarkable types of ventures involved office holders making voluntary contributions for activities such as building roads. Though the members followed the emperor's lead in being seen to be benevolent in that sense, this very fact meant that belonging to an association entailed political risk, so that at least one latter-day liberation movement traces its beginnings to the political crack-down one such association faced at the time (Bonnie Holcombe and Sisai Ibssa, 1990)⁴. Thirty years on, the same fears led to renegotiating power relations; accommodating 'the target' population as the equals of the do-gooders had to be negotiated. As will be illustrated in the case study, the fear arises from the traditional expectation of transferring powers – especially relinquishing decision-making powers over resource management – to the weak.

Others⁵ attribute the continuing poverty to prescriptive social forces of continuity and order that thwart the efforts for development. Ecological disasters, recurring famines, severe poverty, rising population figures, wrong directions in planned processes of change (Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, 1991:96) have also been blamed. For development experts, the responsibility lies with local socio-economic and political contradictions and the economic interests of certain social groups. Definitely seen as part of an incoherent process (Dessalegn Rahmato, 1995: 143-193), the country's incorporation into the global market and increasing dependency of the state on external sources have their contributions too. Only the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that promote, not to say impose, trade interests and globalization on the grounds that these help 'local and innovative' ways for poverty alleviation (Ian Goldin and Kenneth Reinert, 2006: 193-194), feign hope. Needless to say, the details of the transformations in the relations of power under various governments form the archaeology of the bureaucracy as agents of power running the political economy.

State-led development and patrimonial power

Under the monarchy that lapsed in 1974, large gatherings known as 'supplication' (*abetuta*) were a popular means of communication with those in power. Even officials of various governments in the Ethiopian state who undertook to 'do good' in the 1960's understood their intent largely as the search for patrons. A characteristic feature of historical bottom-up communication, now replaced by demonstrations, is still manifest in the migration of destitute rural people towards the capital and other seats of power

³ An example was the road construction association sponsored by people like General Jagama Kello. Another was the Metcha Tulema Association whose efforts were later to be claimed as the beginnings of the Oromo Liberation Front due to the crack down on their developmental intentions.

⁴ See for instance Bonnie Holcombe and Sisai Ibssa 1990.

⁵ For a general introduction see Shiferaw Jammo in Shiferaw Bekele (ed.), 1995: 1-71.

during droughts and economic crises. The main way to become a patron in the pre-modern period was to support people's access to land as a resource. Significantly, the rivalries for the self-serving exercise of power that patronage gave were permeated with a sense of justice in accessing land in a *spirit of charity*. This changed, not legally and formally, but in the way the state allowed its bureaucracy to work when they introduced and ran development. As office holders became increasingly incapable of separating the self-serving exercise of power from the routine dispensation of public duties that the 'modern' institutionalized state supposedly expected of them, they transposed the traditional sense of charity onto the administration of development programs. By personalizing the workings of the state, they challenged mutuality and charity-based power relations, and their confused practice led to the emergence of a patrimonial political culture. The emergence of patrimony undermined the right of the public to challenge injustice and to relate to the authorities in the spirit of charity.

As practices of power failed to institutionalize the means of removing the barriers between the powerful and the weak, dialogue was abandoned as a political strategy for forging relationships. The conditions intensified under three different consecutive governments: the 'modernized' monarchy, the "Marxist-Leninist" *dergue* (1974-1991) and the ethno-Marxist Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF, in power since 1991). When Menelik II (d. 1913) created line ministries (Marcus, 1975:227-228), state services that depended on traditional collection and distribution of tribute by 'feudal-like' provincial governors changed to a centralized bureaucratic administration (Baheru Zewde, 2001:114-120). Roughly between 1941 and 1960, when the monarch's centralized control of state bureaucracy and decision-making was at its height, the bureaucracy forced the provision of public services to take on the guise of distributing the emperor's patrimonial largesse. In addition, the drive for involving Ethiopia in the international market gave the bureaucracy exclusive access to economic power. Aside from incapacitating the internal economy (Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, 1991:2-3), this dependence on external markets, and subsequently aid, led to direct external intervention in the lives of the poor. Land, state and bureaucracy became redundant in relating with the poor. With government policies bolstering the relative economic power of the bureaucrats, and with land losing its economic value for re-establishing equitable relationships, even the politically motivated land redistribution after 1976 (Wogene Yirko, 1994:19) failed to make this local economic resource the critical base of the political economy in relating the population with the state. Corruption and irregularity set in while furthering and strengthening the idea of doing-good to the unequal 'others' in the development process; these conveniently landed lower officials in trouble but gained public applause for the benevolent statesmanship of those at the top. Aid money replaced land as the main bone of political contention in that sense, and the state became free to suppress the traditional charitable sense within the dynamics of domination and subordination, even in its development programmes. An image of an Ethiopian state that was powerful and fearsome, and a society that was weak and cowed, emerged, evoking fear and suspicion of officialdom; service delivery became merely political. "Prestige" was the bureaucrats' argument for convincing themselves that they were untouchable and unaccountable.

The idea of 'development', literally translated in Amharic as "*lemat*", conveyed the idea of fertility, ultimately as in sometimes falsified numerical expansion and growth of

agricultural wealth with the involvement of bureaucrats⁶ who easily considered it a route for prestigious giver-and-receiver charity-based distribution of resources. State cash crop production for foreign exchange, such as the World Bank's Wolayta Agricultural Unit and Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit, caused internally displaced populations. Along with the victims of natural disasters, these attracted international aid delivery, with patron-client relationships as the vehicles. Emperor Haile Selassie I (r. 1930-1974), created extra-state institutions, namely a palace treasury and a palace judiciary system that operated to provide money and other favours to members of the public (Baheru, 2001: 201-202), and members of his bureaucracy engaged in "*lemat*" projects formed 'associations for mutual help' (*meredaja maheber*).

The result was the introduction of the notion that the poor were the *unequal* 'others' who should be looked after. With the state beginning to function as a vehicle of competitive charity, and with the cumulative effects of famine, war, destitution and rising oil prices, the Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries injected charity into their politics of totalitarian redistribution of wealth. Their Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) was mandated to regulate the activities of local charitable organizations and international aid agencies (Dawit Wolde Giorgis, 1989:120-142). Under the EPRDF government that, controlled by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), took over in 1991, bureaucrats, members and political supporters have accessed resources for their personal use⁷. The ruling party's "development" wing, the Relief and Emergency Society of Tigray (REST), has also covertly channelled resources into commercial enterprises (Assefa Negash, 1996: 5, 34, 57, 78 *et passim*)⁸. Neither the monarchical five-year-plan-based development programmes, nor the mega-theory-based populist ideologies, nor the ethnic-based 'decentralization' that began in 1991, have worked to improve the population's economic power (Girma Seyoum: 1992:134-135). No longer the social base of the dependent 'modern state', the land-based peasantry remain unintegrated into the market economy, as scholars have noted (Dessalegn, 1995: 143-193; Eshetu, 1995:228). The irrelevance of people and land for improving the quality of ordinary peoples' lives has created space for international intervention in development.

International challenges to the spirit of charity

This backdrop of complexities, sustains economic vulnerabilities and lack of power; but the international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) lack an understanding of the ordinary Ethiopian's view of charity-based management of resources. The practitioners and advocates of local survival strategies promote the participatory bottom-up approach, and advise tempering the tensions in dominance and subordination in local terms,⁹ but only some acknowledge their own relatively higher political and economic power. This failure¹⁰ is key to the aid paradox. It partly precludes communication over the issues of

⁶ Dessalegn Rahmato calls this sector the 'capitalist farmer, 1995: 184

⁷ The TPLF guerillas' secessionist rhetoric to defend and promote the collective identity of ethnic people from Tigray has been belied by their hold on the national economy and state power. They assumed ethnic identity as a result of their Marxian analysis of "nation/nationalities," as well as their anti-Amhara stance. See Assefa Negash, 1996: 4-5.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Many have adequately dealt with some of the problems associated with this from various angles. See for instance Des Gasper "Problems in the Logical Framework Approach and challenges for 'Project Cycle Management'" in *The Courier* No 173 – January-February, 1999: 75-79.

¹⁰ That the moral arguments derive from the UN human rights charter, as defined by the Bretton Woods Institutions of bilateral aid, and that these depend on Keynesian and business oriented poverty reduction policies, is succinctly presented by Ian Goldin and Kenneth Reinhart, 2006: 2-16, and

local importance and generates the possibility of controlling donor-provided resources as a source of local ‘corruption’. The corollary to this power is the expanding scope of INGO influences on UN and other official multilateral and bilateral agencies, and commercial and other financial institutions. In perspective, not only is the over-worked term ‘globalization’ pertinent to their power and subsuming of the local sense of direction to their interests, but not surprisingly, ‘while many individuals are responsible for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of aid, no one is accountable’ (Gibson et al., 2005:72).

The differences between the traditional Ethiopian ideals of power and those of the ‘modern state’ and INGOs, revolve around the mediation of power in providing and receiving resources. At least in the sense of the public having the capacity to influence policies pertinent to its interests, Western traditions are attributed by Robert Putnam to how de Tocqueville understood the ways Americans were developing their “democracy” in the nineteenth century. De Tocqueville observed that the driving force of civil power was *the competitive spirit* of the market economy of his day (Howell and Pearce, 2001: 42-43). As indicated already, acquiring economic and political power for becoming patrons has continued to be quite pervasive in Ethiopia. Indeed, rather like Putnam’s study of Italy, the power position and prestige of the wealthy and the rulers in Ethiopia, who were historically expected to fulfil certain obligations towards the public, depended on their positive response to those expectations; failure to fulfil them caused discontent and rebellion. The similarity of the Ethiopian to the Western tradition ends there, however. The failed processes of ‘modernity’ and institutionalized bureaucratic systems have left only the powerful in Ethiopia with the ability to access wealth from international sources; ordinary people have lost their medium: land. The power *within* society for asserting justice-based charity and challenging undue dominance has changed. In addition, state and international NGOs fail to distinguish between *international advocacy* and *internal dialogue*. With the confusion between what constitutes the programmatic and reflects the reality in development dialogue, their processes are irrelevant despite the much needed INGO and state inputs. The following illustrates the various disparities discussed do far.

Case study of an independent local NGO

This case study draws on the story of a self-help scheme around an Ethiopian Orthodox churchyard¹¹ over the period when the state was continuing to transpose the multi-layered agenda of contemporary global politics onto the processes of delivering and/or acquiring development resources. Interfaced with an INGO that insisted on helping the poor without understanding the socio-cultural process of survival around an Ethiopian Orthodox church compound, the project was eventually transformed almost into non-existence.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) was the only nationwide institution that Emperor Haile Selassie I permitted to carry out charity work¹². In the 1980s it became one among a large number of NGOs that responded to the *dergue’s* invitation to set up aid camps for the displaced population. As church-based INGOs set out to work

[IUCN: 1997: 41]

¹¹ For confidentiality of identities, the actual names and personalities involved are not given.

¹² At the beginning, the Empress Menen, Haile Selassie’s consort, sponsored the Ethiopian Women’s Welfare Association (EWWA), a charity that functioned openly. Run by bureaucrats’ wives, and perhaps not surprisingly, the EWWA activities were limited to orphanages.

together to meet emergency/relief needs, member agencies of the Europe-based Churches Drought Action Africa/Ethiopia (CDDA/E) worked themselves onto the map of Ethiopia, dividing the country between them for emergency relief distribution (Solberg, 1991:67). The CDDA/E excluded the EOC as not being interested in social concerns (Solberg, 1991:15)¹³, as being affiliated to the World Council of Churches (WCC) rather than itself, and as working with the Marxist-Leninist government. Officially it told the EOC to work with the “national” church agencies in Ethiopia, these being the foreign-based minority churches. With such interventionism, it took two years before the EOC became part of the Joint Relief Partnership.

It that context, destitute people who had migrated to the towns in the 1984-85 crisis had found patrons around an EOC church in the centre of Addis Ababa. The patrons attempted to ease their poverty. Since the 1984-5 famine, they worked with the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA), the consortium of INGOs and local NGOs set up in 1974 to coordinate the relief and development activities of member NGOs¹⁴. Confusion arose when new regulations by the government that took power in 1991 required all aid agencies to work within the framework of the RRC, renamed the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission. REST¹⁵ facilitated the transfer of the majority of local NGOs either to its ownership or at least to its direct control behind the scenes. In addition, the multi-lateral agencies, notably the World Bank and the Inter-African Development Bank, justified “social fund” loans to the ‘disparate ethnic groups’ that ‘lacked unity in nationhood’. A new set of individuals competed in developing prestige and patron-client relationships, and many local patrons channelled resources to their ethnic bases. The church-based NGOs working within the ambit of local EOC churches came under the influence of the new patriarch appointed by the regime from its favoured ethnic group. The beneficiaries in the present case study were characteristically from all religious, social and ethnic backgrounds, and were congregated around a church in Addis Ababa, but this was eventually to affect them seriously¹⁶.

The patrons of this group had formed a parish based Welfare Association (WA) led by a woman whom the authorities of the Patriarchate, the head office of the EOC in Addis Ababa, knew as a social functions organizer interested in constructing roads and renovating church buildings in important monasteries. Because she was unfamiliar with bureaucracy, accountability and such formalities, the relief and development wing of the EOC, known then as the Department of Inter-Church Aid and Development, vouched for her trustworthiness, and wrote letters endorsing her collection of donations from an international NGO through the CRDA. They handled the paperwork, performing the difficult task of observing her regular distribution of relief supplies consisting of emergency food supplies such as flour and oil, blankets, second hand clothing and other items that were delivered at the compound of the church and clothes. She and the parishioners sifted through the donated clothes, sold what they could not distribute, opened a bank account in the name of the WA, and accumulated money for their

¹³ The denial of such traditions is untenable, of course, for anyone who knows the history of the church in Ethiopia.

¹⁴ CRDA publications otherwise a good account of a joint effort by various denomination of churches in the land.

¹⁵ Especially in the 1980s and early 1990s, this aid wing of TPLF had a heady combination of support from western INGOs and Marxism-Leninism.

¹⁶ For reasons of safety and security, names and identities of local people, and in many instances of foreign NGOs, have been withheld. Cf footnote 12.

charity. They also cooked festive food at Christmas and Easter for the target population around the church. Workers, worshippers and others who happened to be near partook of the feasting that was also seen as “breaking bread” with the poor; it gave the woman and her group a special recognition as charitable patrons.

By 1989, they had established regular relationships with about a hundred and thirty recipients of benefits. Bothering very little about its source, the recipients saw the systematic delivery of the supplies as gifts from the church’s parishioners’ council, particularly from the lady handing out the largesse. Whenever they saw her, they ululated and honoured her in many ways. The WA considered that acknowledgement more important than the accountability and other requirements of ‘modern’ sector NGO administration. At that stage, both donors and recipients alike relied on the traditional trustworthiness of patrons to look after the poor.

Changes began to occur when ‘development-conscious’ parishioners consisting of two medical doctors and other professionals – hereafter the ‘new group’ (NG) – joined the WA. They were attracted to the target population by the large number keeping up loud appeals for support right inside the church building, only to be harassed for disturbing the proceedings of the Mass. Some of the professionals worried that poverty related diseases were causing havoc among the poor sheltering in the graveyards and the immediate surroundings of the church. They were conscious that children and the weak especially were endangered by the lack of environmental hygiene. It was also obvious that lack of HIV/AIDS awareness¹⁷ was affecting many who were seeking medical aid from unqualified people mishandling needles and other medical supplies in their “back street” activities.

The NG saw the need for working with a set of people who could gradually become independent of charitable handouts. They engaged the WA in a dialogue, held group and individual interviews with some able-bodied men and women among the potential beneficiaries, and floated the idea of a self-help scheme for empowering them. Seen as part of the “modern” sector, the NG’s perceptions complicated matters. Their proposal provoked two points of dialogue, both creating power tensions. The first was on the parishioners’ perspectives on the rights and responsibilities of beneficiaries and benefactors; the other was on distinguishing the priorities of receivers and givers of emergency supplies.

Dialogue at the crossroads of patronage

The NG found it difficult to impart the idea that economically dependant people were capable of making decisions on their own behalf. The old WA members thought that decision-making powers over emergency supplies should not be extended to the “beneficiaries”. Emphatically pointing out the constantly increasing numbers of the poor, and referring to the new services as *lemat* in the sense discussed above, they argued that allowing such decision making powers would jeopardize the process of acquiring further assistance and disbursing alms. An elder with whom the new group were discussing their proposal gave a striking explanation: “They are telling you [the NG] that they themselves are the poor!”¹⁸ The statement encapsulated the point that everybody who was not in the “modern” sector expected to benefit from the resources it

¹⁷ At the time, HIV/AIDS was not acknowledged openly by the government.

¹⁸ An elder, who had many years of experience with the transition from the old system to ‘modernity’, and who had to observe the *lemat* process while being prevented from participating in it for political reasons, used this phrase in order to explain the thinking of the old patrons.

could bring. Yet the forms of power relationships by now went beyond the patron-client linkages already at work, and bringing members of the WA to engage in dialogue with the poor was necessary. The views of overlapping benefactors and beneficiaries, control of the authority to distribute largesse notwithstanding, needed to be negotiated.

Free medical care provision and clerical and social services would maintain the status of WA members, who, usefully, accepted diversifying the assistance to include medical attention, and endorsed a plan through which the beneficiaries would achieve independence without challenging their patronage. The church administrators supported the NG in some fashion. Explaining that they expected the old and new members alike to work according to the rules they set out for doing good, they insisted that the NG must provide clerical and health services to the church administration. They asserted that *lemat* meant expanding the services of the WA to the benefit of all concerned, including the administrative structures of the church and the WA. They appropriated direct supervision and control of the resources, both human and material, including the emergency supplies. Income generation and medical service provision would have to operate directly under the parish management committee, the authority higher than the charity groups and closer to the church administrators. They thus initiated a subtly built-in power tension in the very process of implementing the self-help scheme. The *lemat* proposed by the NG would have to benefit a wide category of beneficiaries and enhance the prestige of an expanding category of patrons.

The NG formulated ways of distinguishing their administrative authority from the medical professionals' practices. They convinced the patrons that their leadership encompassed superiority over those from the 'modern' sector who performed the voluntary research, medical and clerical services as free contributions. They also requested that a small number of the target population be involved in decision making on the proposed phased self-help scheme of income generation. For some time the distinction between the WA members and the target population had to be kept as vague as possible. Despite these negotiated responsibilities and rights, defining the authority of WA members, church administrators and beneficiaries remained a problem.

While the "target" population now included everybody *not* in the 'modern' sector, the problem of losing sight of how best to ensure that the supplies and services acquired in their name could reach the beneficiaries, was real. The solution to centralize the homeless, the hungry and destitute in the vicinity of the church, came after six months, when the scheme was translated as a process of "capacity building" for the church administration, the WA and, of course, the main beneficiaries. With this redefinition, the volunteer medical professionals would dispense their services and medication only to benefactors whom they examined; the lady would remain as chairperson of the WA, the head of the church would remain the overseer, and the present writer would be a volunteer coordinator. The NG would work directly with the destitute on the self-help scheme, while involving the patrons, recipients and church administrators in planning and working towards the specific goal of the self-rehabilitation and sustenance of everyone, including those receiving emergency relief. Enhancing the old patrons' capacity to provide help respected their interests, authority and sense of prestige

Popularizing rights-based self-help

Even with these strategic conclusions on power and authority, it was a long process to see the project into practice. Orientating the beneficiaries to be involved on their own behalf proactively needed as much energy as easing the WA committee to agree to

make space for some of the poor to decide for themselves about their self-rehabilitation. At the end of a further series of meetings, the beneficiaries addressed the problem and held their own meetings, largely through the efforts of a group of young Sunday school students (hereafter the youth group, YG) who were voluntarily serving the church administration and the parishioners¹⁹. These 'foot-soldiers' had been assigned by the administrators to work on distributing the emergency food and other supplies, and were known to a large number of the regular alms recipients. Already critical of the old patrons for failing to utilize the supplies effectively, they readily accepted the NG's idea of empowering the poor in a different way. The NG coached them in identifying people with similar skills, in orientating them to work together, pooling their labour and dividing their time between begging and assuming control of their self-rehabilitation, as well as asserting their rights over the emergency supplies and other services. A retired university lecturer in social work provided the YG with a crash course on several aspects of assisting the target population, including on liaising with the target group as though they were case and/or social workers.

The NG, having put up some finance, involved the YG in conducting a three-tier pilot research. The first level of research was among the parish committee members. The result showed that the committee members suspected that the members of the NG would prove to be opportunists trying to create paid jobs for themselves, that they would not deliver the promises they were making to increase and diversify the assistance, and that they would even take over the administration of the church. The NG conducted the second level research among potential donors, and found that the INGO community would support a self-help pilot project provided the scheme could be replicated elsewhere in the city. The third level of research was a survey of the target population concerning the self-help project, and specifically on whether the proposal would be acceptable to them and how, if at all, it could proceed.

The findings showed that the proposal posed potential threats to the target population: Some interviewees reported that a rumour had already been circulating that anyone who would be involved in a self-help project would be removed by force to unfamiliar environments. Others feared they would be de-linked from their existing benefactors around the church. Biographical notes from some interviewees showed that many above the age of fifty-five had found themselves in extremely dire straits during the upheavals of the socialist revolution in 1974/75 that impoverished the urban wage earning population, losing them their supportive families and social niches. A few had already tried to survive as domestics or day labourers, but even such employment was not available to them because they were homeless²⁰. Most of the target population did not need convincing about engaging in self-help, and the YG proposed to enrol those who wanted to try it out.

Negotiating for the self-help project to be planned jointly by the 29 candidates and the patrons was a real hurdle. After conversations stimulated by the research effort, the youth drew up a list of 29 beneficiary volunteers and invited them to attend a meeting with the church administration and patrons. The latter could see the transfer of some of their prestige to a self-help group that was increasingly managing its own affairs. Having retained traditional expectations of prestige from the patron-client relationships,

¹⁹ Most of the males among them were in fact taking the chance of avoiding forced enlistment in the militia, while the girls were trying to find appropriate waged employment.

²⁰ The reason given was that the government was insisting that potential employees provide home addresses.

many of the patrons were ambiguous about working with the ‘modern’ sector and with the poor who expected them to relate to them with equality in distributing the resources.

The beneficiaries too were at first reluctant to be in the face-to-face joint decision meetings with ‘the target population’. In the event, they spelt out their desire to try out the proposed scheme, and the patrons endorsed their rights to engage in the self-help scheme. The traditional skills the beneficiaries had between them included spinning cotton, weaving clothes, carpentry and rug making. Interestingly, the male beneficiaries opted to make rugs, and the women to spin for cloth making. Though most were unable to specify the work they could do, some of the 29 expressed interest in acquiring raw material for producing cotton thread, baskets, rugs and clothes, along with having a working space. Some of these men and women eventually chose to try to organize and work jointly. With the continued assistance of emergency supplies, together with the effectiveness and strength of the medical service, and of the YG ‘social workers’, the beneficiaries’ made finding accommodation their first priority. Their additional worry was seed money for starting production and regular marketing, and almost all mentioned the need for stability, space and resources to tide them over a period when they could start to produce marketable goods.

Constant dialogue having established their felt needs and the seriousness of their thinking about self-help and self-sustenance, the NG put up seed money for raw materials from their own pockets, and volunteered time and labour to help the 29 beneficiaries engage in the initial stages of their self-help activities. Other beneficiaries learned new skills from the 29, and how to plan their lives around the production of marketable goods for income-generation. Eventually, all the beneficiaries orientated themselves towards pooling part of their future income as a revolving fund. This was their way of enhancing the benefits of the supplies that came in their names. By the end of 1990, the 29 were generating income for themselves, assisted by the regular services of the YG, the volunteer medical doctor, the social services coordinator and the overall coordinator. Some of them had taken rented shelter in the neighbourhood, away from the streets and the graveyard. As initial beneficiaries paid back the cost of the original inputs for raw materials into the revolving fund, others took their place to start similar schemes. About 120 were on a waiting list. Within a year, the WA renamed itself the “Church Society to Help Aged Men and Women” (hereafter “the Society”). It continued to collect and give out emergency supplies for many among the needy.

As the rehabilitation process began in earnest for a small number of people, external input also increased. DED, a German INGO providing help to grassroots initiatives, gave the Society a grant for the remuneration of the eight youths and a part-time office coordinator. Help Age International, then still struggling to register its operational status in the country, became involved in providing office supplies and clerical assistance. Finally, the Society’s activities drew positive attention from the church administration, which had already provided office space, and the head of the church handed over to the care of the NG the money that the patrons had been accumulating since 1984-85. The church administration accommodated both the old patrons and the newcomers in working with the beneficiaries. Further, the NG had already established a liaison with the CRDA due to the clerical help they were providing to the WA, and it organized with the CRDA a one-day workshop on distinguishing between giving alms and engaging in rights based development²¹. Some parishioners and staff of NGOs around town attended

²¹ An in-house CRDA publication came out as the proceedings of this meeting.

it. At the end of the workshop the participants were invited to visit the base of the WA at the church. The guests received a guided tour by the lady chairperson, and even spoke with some of the beneficiaries.

Thus drawn into a city-wide dialogue, the WA entered another phase: it established both a reputation and commitment for a rights-based self-help oriented scheme. Seeing this confidence, the church administration made available an office space for storage of supplies, and for medical and social service consultation. The volunteer medical doctor also started 'home-based' health and social care for the poor, going around and visiting the very weak elderly people, assisted by the YG. She attracted other volunteer doctors, and other residents of the parish began to avail of her services too. Through her efforts, an INGO provided a laboratory and blood testing equipment. These were housed in two containers donated to the WA, on the recommendation of the CRDA, by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, the main Lutheran church of Ethiopia, and the Department for World Service (the international aid department) of the Lutheran World Federation. Pleased with the enhanced recognition they received, the patrons relinquished further administrative responsibilities to the 'modern' sector volunteers. They even relinquished to the YG the distribution of the emergency supplies of oil, flour and blankets, as well as, at this stage, medical supplies. The changes in the self-help oriented Society meant that it developed an image of a viable "modern" organization with a potential for enhanced prestige for the patrons.

Challenges

With its raised profile, the leaders tried to register the Society as a charity. Unwittingly, this brought it to the attention of the state, and evoked internal rivalry and an inappropriate suggestion to expand. Towards the end of 1990, the lady chairperson came up with an additional '*lemat*' project. Aware of homes for senior citizens from her visits to the USA, she negotiated with the municipality for land and requested that the NG prepare a project proposal to raise funds for a substantial "day care centre for the elderly." Though certain that such a centre would be irrelevant to the scheme, the NG felt obliged to find a volunteer architect to design it, and started to look for grants from donors. Also at this stage, two events that related to one another on the level of state politics began to affect the Society. The patriarch opened a new hall at the church, and the Society and its premises became a centrepiece of his visit. Subsequently he removed the head priest, whom he appointed a bishop without portfolio, and replaced him with someone who, like himself, was from the preferred ethnic group. Automatically that made the church and the parish amenable to the new ethnic politics pursued by the patriarchate; the new overseer presided over the 'prestigious' Society. In an unrelated event, the volunteer coordinator left the country in 1993²². This opened space for a damaging conflict of roles among those responsible for running the scheme.

In that context, a newly appointed expatriate administrator of one of the donor INGOs found 'faults' with the existing social service coordinator over administrative-cum-reporting matters. She informally suggested that the Society would ultimately benefit if someone else replaced the social service coordinator. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, her proposed candidate was a former guerrilla fighter with "better experience" of running voluntary organizations, "having worked with REST". As the social service coordinator was facilitating the handover, she found that six out of

²² For partly ethnic reasons, she was targeted for arbitrary dismissal from her university teaching post, along with 41 other mainly senior professors. Subtle harassment forced her to leave the country.

eight of the YG who worked as social and case workers were also dismissed. While the remains of the NG continued to work irrespective of these changes, the lady chairperson fell from grace in the eyes of the EOC headquarters.

These various changes coincided with nationwide dismissals, harassment and re-allocation of workers on the basis of newly drawn up ethnic boundaries. Setting out to work with the state that was undertaking a re-hauling process, the new INGO administrator was challenging the Society with the new ethnic-based relations of power. In the context of the patriarchate's appointment that followed the regime's lead, and aiming at accommodating government-sponsored individuals, organization and thinking, she set to reinventing the claim of standing for the downtrodden yet again²³. Unwittingly she reversed what the Society had achieved through dialogue²⁴. Her reference point was the wide socio-political complication of power – the government – and she used the economic resources she was disbursing to distance the beneficiaries from their self-initiated scheme. Her contribution to making the local NGO vulnerable to manipulation, by both her organization and the state, directly impacted on this locally initiated development process. By the end of 1995, both the old patrons and the NG, including the medical volunteers, had been marginalized. The beneficiaries who initiated the self-help scheme were also marginalized from the resources of the Society. The new “volunteer” medical officers of the medical and clinical services commercialized the facility. Nothing of the self-help activity has remained operational, and the upshot was that the elderly men and women reverted to trying individually to meet their subsistence needs around the church by begging from church-goers.

Conclusions

Differences in perception, practicalities and continuities of power relations made dialogue difficult. As *lemat*, ‘development’ had eventually become a process of handouts and largesse, leaving service provision open to the arbitrary good will or whimsical social engineering of officials. In particular, the transposition of the ideas of justice-based charity onto the workings of the bureaucracy in the ‘modern’ sector of the Ethiopian state, had made patrimonial relations pervasive of both state guided ‘development’ and that of do-gooders who had accepted it as a route to acquiring prestige. As different governments translated patrimonial relations to suit their ideologies and to accommodate global forces, the local dynamics of development were ignored. The Society and the associated self-help scheme that had emerged during the last phases of the totalitarian but tottering military power could not withstand the patrimonial cloak of the successor regime. The INGO that worked with it failed to distinguish between the local beneficiaries who already had taken their own initiatives, and others who were favoured by the government of the day²⁵. Selecting ‘local’ beneficiaries according to the state criteria co-opted the local NGO to the patrimonial politics of the government party. It undermined the local effort to make development a

²³ A scenario articulated in, among others, Porter, 1995: 65, who argues ‘...the contemporary recasting of the original master metaphors [of development] and their buttressing by neo-populist sentiments can be read as a new attempt to reassert order, stability and continuity in the face of global biospheric and societal uncertainty and discontinuity that constitute the call-signs of the post-modern epoch’.

²⁴ Lack of state accountability to aid beneficiaries, in this case, the homeless who are automatically ruled out of voting or tax payments threatened the cadres who were responsible to the new government that came to power in 1991. The theoretical implications of such disconnection between the state and beneficiaries of aid are discussed in Gibson et al. 2005: 73.

²⁵ Further light is thrown on this process by the fact that a number of INGOs, including Help the Aged, already had a close relationship with REST long before TPLF came to power.

rights-based participatory process through dialogue. Without meaning to do so, the INGO leader made the Society and its self-help scheme irrelevant, and returned the poor to live under indefinite patronage, thus re-entrenching the local inequalities. Her actions towards the local NGO contradicted the bottom-up transformation and empowerment of the poor that was already in place in this particular case.

The paper has illustrated that the terms of state and socio-political relationships among stakeholders are not clearly understood in Ethiopia, and that charity-based dialogue over those relationships is an important process of strengthening local initiatives. Appropriate systems of dialogue over the relations of power should mean implementing a policy that prioritizes the weaker over the powerful party. Rather than defining their target population, it is vital for international actors and governments to create an environment that enables the poor to work on their self-empowerment, including mitigating resistance that focussing on the local poor may engender. The “partnership” between local and international NGOs must be premised on equality between them. Even when using their human resources and finances, they should especially accommodate local ideas of mediating relations of power.

List of acronyms:

CDDA/E	Churches Drought Action Africa/Ethiopia
CRDA	Christian Relief and Development Association
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst (German Development Service)
DPPC	Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
EPRDF	Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Front
INGO	International non-governmental organization
NG	New Group
NGO	Non-governmental organization
REST	Relief and Emergency Association of Tigray
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front
WA	Welfare Association
YG	Youth Group

Amharic words used:

<i>Abetuta</i>	supplication
<i>Debo</i>	agricultural work association
<i>Dergue</i>	(also <i>derg</i>) literally ‘council’, a self-descriptive term adopted by the military government of Ethiopia, 1974-1991
<i>Edir</i>	burial association
<i>Equb</i>	credit association
<i>Hazeneta</i>	sympathy, empathy, considerateness and a feeling for humanity in the universal sense
<i>Lemat</i>	development
<i>Mahber</i>	an organized social group
<i>Meredaja mahber</i>	association for mutual help
<i>Wenfel</i>	women’s work association mainly for cloth making

References

- Aberra Jembere (2000) *An Introduction to the Legal History of Ethiopia: 1434-1974*, LIT Verlag, Münster, Hamburg and London.
- Assefa Negash (1996) *The Pillage of Ethiopia by Eritreans and their Tigrean Surrogates*, Adey Publishing Company, Los Angeles, California.
- Baheru Zewde (2001) *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974*, James Curry, London, Ohio University Press, Athens, Addis Ababa Univeristy Press, Addis Ababa.
- Clapham, Christopher (1988) *Transformation and Continuity in Revolutionary Ethiopia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Des Gasper, "Problems in the Logical Framework Approach and challenges for 'Project Cycle Management'" in *The Courier* No 173 – January-February 1999, pp. 75-79.
- Dessalegn Rahmato (1995) "Peasant Agriculture Under the Old Regime" in *An Economic History of Ethiopia, Volume I: The Imperial Era 1941-74*, CODESRIA Book Series. Shiferaw Bekele (ed.).
- Erku Yimer (Ethiopian National Congress) 'Building Democratic Institutions of Governance and Civil Insitutions'. A paper presented at the 4th International Conference on Ethiopia and North East Africa, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan. August 2-4, 2007. Unpublished.
- Eshetu Chole (1995) "Running to Keep in the Same Place: Industrialization 1941-74" in *An Economic History of Ethiopia, Volume I: The Imperial Era 1941-74*, CODESRIA Book series. Shiferaw Bekele (ed.).
- Eshetu Chole (1994) "Issues of Vertical Imbalance in Ethiopia's Emerging System of Fiscal Decentralization" in *Fiscal Decentralization in Ethiopia*, Eshetu Chole (ed) Addis Ababa.
- Ferguson, James (1990) *The Anti-Politics Machine, "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*, Cambridge University Press.
- Gibson, Clark, Krister Anderson, Elinor Ostrom, and Sujani Shivakumar (eds) (2005) *The Samaritan's Dilemma: The Political Economy of Development Aid*, OUP.
- Girma Seyoum (1994) "Fiscal Decentralization and Microeconomic Management in Ethiopia" in Eshetu Chole (ed), *Fiscal Decentralization in Ethiopia*, pp. 121-139.
- Goldin, Ian and Kenneth Reinhart (2006) *Globalization for Development: Trade, Finance, Aid, Migration and Policy*, World Bank Publications.
- Holcombe, Bonnie and Sisai Ibsa (1990) *The Invention of Ethiopia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Howell, J. and J. Pearce (2001) *Civil Society and Development: A Critical Exploration*, Lynne Rienner Publications, Boulder and London.
- Marcus, H. (1975; 1995) *The Life and Times of Menelik II, Ethiopia 1844-1913*, Clarendon Press, Oxford; Red Sea Press, New Jersey.
- Markakis, John (1974) *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.
- Mesfin Wolde-Mariam, (1991) *Suffering Under God's Environment: a Vertical Study of the Predicament of Peasants in North-Central Ethiopia*, African Mountains Association and Geographica Bernensia.
- Porter, Doug J. (1995) *Power of Development*, Routledge.
- Shiferaw Bekele (ed.) (1995) *An Economic History of Ethiopia, Volume I: The Imperial Era 1941-74*, CODESRIA Book Series.

- Shiferaw Jammo (1995) 'An overview of the economy, 1941-74' in Shiferaw Bekele (ed.) *An Economic History of Ethiopia, Volume I: The Imperial Era 1941-74*, CODESRIA Book Series.
- Solberg, Richard W. (1991) *Miracle in Ethiopia: a partnership response to famine*, Friendship Press, New York.
- Wogene Yirko (1994) 'History of the Post-War Ethiopian Fiscal System', in *Fiscal Decentralization in Ethiopia*, Eshetu Chole, (ed), Addis Ababa University Press.
- Wolde Giyorgis, Dawit (1989) *Red Tears: War Famine and Revolution in Ethiopia*, Red Sea Press.

The Ethiopian Diaspora and Homeland Conflict

Terrence Lyons¹

Globalization and increased human mobility has made politics increasingly transnational with non-resident groups such as diasporas playing increasingly important roles. The May 2005 elections demonstrate the influence of the Ethiopia diaspora, both in the decision by opposition parties to participate and then in the debates on whether the opposition should take up their seats in parliament.

Globalization has shaped how processes of migration, exile, and the formation of diaspora and other transnational networks operate. By decreasing communication and travel costs, globalization has made it easier for migrants to form networks that link geographically distant populations to social, political, and economic developments in the homeland. Those forced across borders by conflict or repression commonly have a specific set of traumatic memories and hence create specific types of “conflict-generated diasporas” that retain highly salient symbolic ties to the homeland. These diasporas are often mobilized and engaged in homeland politics in ways that shape processes of conflict and democratization.

Conflict-generated diasporas – with their origins in violent displacement and their identities linked to symbolically important territory – often play critical roles with regard to political struggles in the homeland. As recent economic research has noted, diaspora remittances often sustain parties engaged in civil war.² Other research notes that remittances are often critical to basic survival to the most vulnerable in conflict and postconflict contexts.³ Beyond resources, conflict-generated diasporas frequently have a particularly important role in framing conflict issues and defining what is politically acceptable. Diaspora groups created by conflict and sustained by traumatic memories tend to compromise less and therefore reinforce and exacerbate conflicts’ protractedness. In some cases, such as the Tamil, Armenian, or segments of the Ethiopian diasporas, this tendency to frame the homeland conflict in categorical, hard-line terms strengthens confrontational homeland leaders and organizations and undermines others seeking compromise. In other cases, diaspora groups have transformed themselves from supporters of militant elements to key partners with peacemakers, as seen in the Irish-American diaspora and the Good Friday agreements.⁴ Conflict-generated diasporas therefore are often key actors in homeland conflicts and may contribute either to increased polarization or new opportunities for peace.⁵

¹ Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University, Arlington, Virginia, USA.

² Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievances in Civil War,” (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2355, 2000), p. 26.

³ Patricia Weiss Fagan and Micah N. Bump, *Remittances in Conflict and Crisis: How Remittances Sustain Livelihoods in War, Crises, and Transitions to Peace* (New York: International Peace Academy Policy Paper, February 2006).

⁴ Feargal Cochrane, “Irish-America, the End of the IRA’s Armed Struggle and the Utility of ‘Soft Power,’” *Journal of Peace Research* 44:2 (2007): 215-231.

⁵ Wolfram Zunzer, *Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation*, Berlin: Berghof

This paper will explore patterns of relationships between conflict-generated diasporas and homeland politics with particular reference to how conflicts are framed and the boundaries of legitimate political goals and strategies created and reinforced. It will use a case study of the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States to reflect the complexity of this community and the different ways that segments of the diaspora relate their identity to the homeland. The 2005 political opening and subsequent crisis in Ethiopia illustrates some of the ways this diaspora has shaped recent political developments.

Globalization and Conflict-Generated Diasporas

As the pace and scale of globalization has increased in recent years key political, economic, and social developments often take place outside a given state's sovereign territory. Conflict-generated diasporas are a particular category characterized by their displacement's source (violent, forced separation rather than relatively voluntary economic pursuits) and by the consequent nature of their homeland ties (identities emphasizing links to symbolically salient territory, ongoing political engagement).⁶ The trauma of violent displacement is vivid in the first generations' minds and is often kept alive in subsequent generations through commemorations and symbols. In fact, one function of conflict-generated diaspora networks is to ensure that displacement's original cause is remembered and the grievance passed on to the next generation. The central importance of conflict therefore shapes identities among certain conflict-generated diasporas in their new host country and serves as a focal point for community mobilization.

Some have suggested that globalization and the development of "diasporic identities" would make territory and boundaries less salient as political, social, and economic life becomes deterritorialized.⁷ Appadurai, for example, writes that "the landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapas – around the world are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically self-conscious, or culturally homogenous."⁸ Rather than seeking to build a deterritorialized transnational community, however, many diaspora groups retain and amplify attachment to their identity's territorial aspect even if they are physically distant or unlikely even to visit that territory. A sense of solidarity and attachment to a particular locality can generate a common identity without propinquity, where territorially defined community and spatial proximity are decoupled without diminishing the salience of territoriality. Political actors and processes may be transnational but issues often remain territorial.

Occasional Paper no. 26, September 2004; A. A. Mohamoud, *Mobilising African Diaspora for the Promotion of Peace in Africa* (Amsterdam: African Diaspora Policy Center, May 2005); Gregory Kent, "Organised Diaspora Networks and Homeland Peacebuilding: The Bosnian World Diaspora Network as a Potential Development Actor," *Conflict, Security, and Development* 6:3 (October 2006): 449-469.

⁶ Terrence Lyons, "Diasporas and Homeland Conflict," in Miles Kahler and Barbara Walter, eds., *Globalization, Territoriality, and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). For different perspectives on defining diasporas see William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return," *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 89-99; Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (Cambridge University Press, 2003); Robin Cohen, *Global Diaspora: An Introduction* (London: University College London, 1997).

⁷ Östen Wahlbeck, *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1999), p. 27.

⁸ Arjun Appadurai, "Global Ethnoscapas: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology," in Richard G. Fox, ed., *Recapturing Anthropology* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991), p. 191.

Diaspora websites and publications emphasize the symbols of the nation state – maps, flags, symbolic geographic features, or indigenous plants and animals. Often the language of exile emphasizes the links to homeland as a very much earthly place by speaking of the “original soil” and the need to maintain “roots” in times of dispersal.⁹ As day-to-day activities focus on the new place of residence and as a consequence the instrumental value of territory diminishes, the homeland’s symbolic value increases. Since symbolic attachment is paramount to these communities, many conflict-generated diasporas oppose bargains that trade off some portion of the sacred homeland for some other goal or powersharing arrangements that will undermine their claims to legitimate ownership.

Diasporas in general develop social networks both to retain identity and to promote community self-help programs for finding jobs, housing, and managing immigration issues in their new host countries. They often form religious communities, schools to maintain homeland languages and cultural practices among children, and other social clubs to celebrate religious holidays or to mark other symbolically important dates. These social networks often are used to mobilize the diaspora in support of a party engaged in homeland conflict. Annual events such as the Ethiopian soccer tournament in North America bring thousands together not only to compete and socialize but also to talk politics.

Several recent studies have focused on the question of diaspora funding for homeland insurgencies and recent concerns regarding terrorist group financing have raised this issue’s policy importance. The Tamil diaspora provides critical funding to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the links between diaspora fundraising and conflict have been noted with regard to the Kurdish Workers Party, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and political and military movements in the Balkans.¹⁰ Diaspora networks often lobby host countries for diplomatic support, promote public education and public relations, and organize demonstrations that promote their cause and keep it on the international agenda.¹¹

Financing insurgents and lobbying host governments are not the only ways that diasporas relate to homeland politics. In cases where authoritarian regimes limit political mobilization and speech it is often within the broader body politic, including the diaspora communities, where political debates occur, platforms developed, and leadership established. These ideas and social capital – “social remittances” – flow back to the homeland and often play significant roles.¹² In many cases of authoritarianism and conflict, lack of freedom in the homeland limits space for political discussions and diaspora debates fill the vacuum and supply many of the ideas and models for action adopted by the homeland opposition. Diaspora networks therefore can serve as gatekeepers for political debates and shape which political ideas are considered legitimate in the homeland.

⁹ Hamid Naficy, “The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile,” *Diaspora* 1:3 (Winter 1991): 285-302.

¹⁰ Daniel L. Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan, *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2001).

¹¹ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003).

¹² Peggy Levitt, “Social Remittances: Migration-Driven, Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion,” *International Migration Review* 32:4 (Winter 1998), p. 926.

Benedict Anderson once characterized diaspora groups as “long-distance nationalists” who are inherently unaccountable because they do not have to pay the price for the polarizing policies they support:

While technically a citizen of the state in which he comfortably lives, but to which he may feel little attachment, he finds it tempting to play identity politics by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting) in the conflicts of his imagined Heimat [homeland] – now only fax time away. But this citizenless participation is inevitably non-responsible – our hero will not have to answer for, or pay the price of, the long-distance politics he undertakes.¹³

One need not agree with this broad-brush criticism to accept that diasporas often frame conflict in the homeland in categorical, uncompromising terms. The diaspora point of view and the way it sets the terms of debate and strategy is quite powerful because exiles often have greater media access and the time, resources, and freedom to articulate and circulate a political agenda than actors in the conflicted homeland.

The cost of refusing compromise is often low (if the diaspora members are well-established in Europe, North America, or Australia) and the rewards from demonstrating steadfast commitment to the cause is high (in personal/psychological terms but also as a mechanism of social mobilization). Diaspora groups can complicate and aggravate political struggles within their homelands. As suggested by Maney, external supporters “not only can exacerbate problems encountered by domestic coalitions but can also introduce additional obstacles to the effective pursuit of social change.”¹⁴ One way to keep the past relevant is to keep alive the hope of returning, once conditions allow, even if this aspiration is remote.¹⁵ Characterizing the regime in the homeland as brutal provides a rationale to remaining outside of the homeland.

The Ethiopian Diaspora

Conflict-generated diasporas therefore relate to homeland politics and conflicts in specific ways and often play critical roles. Symbolically salient territory and justifications that support continued exile can lead to categorical perspectives on homeland conflict and overstated attacks of the regime in power. This point of view, in turn, frames the political debates in the homeland in ways that tend to reinforce those disinclined to seek compromise, thereby making constructive conflict resolution and political dialogue more difficult. An analysis of the case of the Ethiopian diaspora in North America will serve to illustrate some of these points. After providing a background sketch of the Ethiopian diaspora, the paper will consider its role both in the democratic opening of May 2005 and the subsequent violent demonstrations, arrests, and emphasis on armed struggle rather than electoral competition.

The overall Ethiopian community in the United States is estimated to total anywhere from 250,000 to 500,000 with a large concentration in the Washington metropolitan area. In the 1960s and early 1970s the United States had a significant population of Ethiopian students. In later years migrants have come in waves in response to violence or political repression in the homeland. The first wave of those associated with Emperor Haile Sellasie’s regime fled the Marxist military government known as the Derg in the

¹³ Benedict Anderson, “The New World Disorder,” *New Left Review* 193 (1992): 13.

¹⁴ Gregory M. Maney, “Transnational Mobilization and Civil Rights in Northern Ireland,” *Social Problems* 47:2 (2000), p. 153.

¹⁵ William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return,” *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 89-99.

early 1970s. These were followed by leftist opponents such as supporters of the Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP) who fled the period of “Red Terror” in the mid- to late-1970s. The rule of the Derg saw protracted conflict against the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front as well as a series of nationally based insurgencies, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) that eventually created the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Party (EPRDF) and seized power from the Derg in 1991. Many in the diaspora opposed the Derg but also rejected the EPRDF’s plans to rebuild Ethiopia on the basis of ethnically defined regions and parties. Others disparaged the EPRDF as unsophisticated and under-educated bush fighters from rural Tigray, upstarts who should step aside so that those Amharic-speaking urban professionals in the diaspora could govern. As a result, the new EPRDF government faced hostility from leading members of the diaspora from the beginning.

The Ethiopian diaspora community in North America has a wide range of organizations and newspapers, maintains dozens of websites, e-mail lists and influential blogs, broadcasts a number of weekly radio and cable television shows, and has a strong influence on the strategies and tactics of political actors back in Ethiopia. Most diaspora organizations and media focus on cultural, professional, and economic self-help initiatives rather than partisan politics. A number of Ethiopian Orthodox churches have been established across North America and publications like the “Ethiopian Yellow Pages” help Ethiopian-owned businesses and professionals to support one another.¹⁶ The Ethiopian Sports Federation on North America has a soccer league with 25 teams and an annual tournament that draws tens of thousands and is an opportunity to renew old friendships, build solidarity, and listen to major diaspora musicians. Professional associations such as the Ethiopian North American Health Professionals Association engage in distance education, specialized training for Ethiopian medical professionals, visiting surgical teams, collection of medical books and equipment, and financial support in response to the health care crisis in Ethiopia.¹⁷ Many of the social and professional organizations contribute to the web of relationships and social capital that in turn are used by more political organizations to mobilize the community to support various movements engaged in political struggles in the homeland.

It is impossible to characterize the diverse population and wide range of identities within the Ethiopian diaspora fully or accurately. The diaspora is by no means unified. Some favor the incumbent EPRDF government, others a range of opposition political parties, and still others support movements such as the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) that seeks self-determination for the Oromo people. Given the official embassy’s active engagement and profile, those who support the government have less need to establish diaspora organizations or media, leaving these organizations more in the hands of opposition leaders.

Ethiopian political leaders, including those in the government as well as those in the opposition, regularly send delegations to brief their respective communities in North America and to solicit political and financial support. The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a General Directorate in charge of Ethiopian Expatriate Affairs, includes a regular “Diaspora Forum” column in the ministry’s monthly newsletter. Major opposition parties in Ethiopia such as the Coalition for Unity and Development (CUD) and the OLF have organized branches in North America that mobilize supporters, raise

¹⁶ See www.ethiowhitepages.com.

¹⁷ See www.enahpa.org.

money, publish newspapers and internet sites, and lobby on behalf of their organizations.

The Ethiopian diasporas are key players in homeland conflicts, in part because they provide key financial support but also because they frame the conflicts through their control over media outlets and other institutions where political strategies are debated and leaderships and strategies legitimized. The limits on political activities within Ethiopia have displaced political debate and mobilization onto transnational actors and processes such as the diaspora networks. Due to the nature of their attachment to the homeland, many in the diaspora have framed the conflicts categorically and have supported the most militant, uncompromising leaders back home. The Ethiopian diaspora therefore has the capacity to make conflict resolution more difficult and the conflict more protracted.

The Ethiopian Diaspora and the Political Opportunity and Crisis of 2005

The importance of links between the Ethiopian diaspora and politics in Ethiopia was made dramatically clear in 2005. A series of incidents since the 1991, however, suggest that these roles are not new. When the opposition Southern Coalition entertained the idea of engaging with the EPRDF regime and competing in the 1995 elections, the diaspora was sharply critical and labeled Beyene Petros, the coalition's leader, as a traitor. Unable to ignore this pressure, the Southern Coalition ultimately boycotted the elections.¹⁸ When splits within the Tigray People's Liberation Front erupted in March 2001, both factions immediately sent high-level delegations to the United States to shape how the diaspora understood the intraparty conflict and to build support for their respective factions.¹⁹ Many of the most vigorous and dedicated supporters of Oromo self-determination and the OLF are in the diaspora. These supporters have insisted on uncompromising and unqualified demands – liberation of all Oromia by military means – and have supported OLF military leaders who pursue this agenda rather than other Oromo leaders such as those in the Oromo National Congress or Oromo Federal Democratic Movement prepared to engage in political competition with the incumbent regime.

The shift in strategy by key leaders in the diaspora to endorse and support participation in elections therefore was critical to the commitment by opposition parties to compete in 2005. In part as a result of this change of strategy by diaspora political organizations, the 2005 elections presented the Ethiopian people with a remarkable opportunity to express their political views by participating in a poll that for the first time in history offered them a meaningful choice. In contrast to elections in 1995 and 2000, opposition parties did not boycott the polls but instead competed vigorously across the most populous regions. Live televised debates on matters of public policy, opposition party access to state-owned media, and huge, peaceful rallies in the final week of campaigning made it clear that these elections would represent a decisive moment in Ethiopia's political development. The Ethiopian people seized this opportunity with great hope and turned out in overwhelming numbers to express their choice.

The two main opposition coalitions that participated in the May 2005 elections had clear roots in the diasporas of North America and Europe. The United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF) was created in 2003 at a convention held in the United

¹⁸ "Ethiopia: Negotiations in Washington," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 658 (11 February 1995).

¹⁹ "Ethiopia: Diaspora Unconvinced and Angry," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 953 (9 June 2001).

States and included diaspora-based parties such as the EPRP as well as parties based in the homeland such as the Oromo National Congress and the Southern Coalition. The Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) also had links to powerful diaspora fundraisers and media outlets and included several prominent leaders who had been members of the diaspora, notably Berhanu Nega and Yacob Haile Mariam, both of whom had been university professors in the United States.

According to official results, the EPRDF and allied parties won 367 (67 percent) while the opposition took 172 seats (31 percent), with 109 going to the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD). These official results represented a stunning setback for the ruling party. Many in the opposition, however, pressed further and insisted that they had irrefutable evidence that the EPRDF had lost the election and that massive fraud had taken place. Violence erupted following electoral protests in Addis Ababa in June 2006 and the summer and early fall 2006 saw a series of investigations of complaints, re-voting in some constituencies, donor-sponsored talks between the government and opposition, and continued controversy.

In this dangerous context the two opposition coalitions engaged in a lengthy and sometimes public series of consultations to plan their next steps. Some favored a strategy of taking up their seats in parliament and in the Addis Ababa regional government and using these positions to build a stronger opposition in preparation for local elections scheduled for 2006 and the next round of national elections in 2010. Escalating violence, these leaders argued, would only play into the hands of the EPRDF, which had overwhelming military dominance.

Others, however, argued that accepting results that they and their supporters believed were fraudulent would make a mockery of democracy and that the opposition should stick to its principles and boycott the parliament. The EPRDF's unilateral decision to change the rules of parliament to make a 51 percent majority necessary to place an item on the agenda (rather than the 20 signatures previously necessary) and new limits on the authority of the opposition-controlled Addis Ababa regional council reinforced the opposition's belief that the incumbent regime would never allow it to play a meaningful role. Some of the most vocal elements in the diaspora supported this position and accused those willing to participate in the parliament of betraying the cause.

It is impossible to assess the relative strengths of these contrasting points of view. What is clear is that the ultimate decision was the outcome of an extended and relatively open period of debate within the opposition, including those based within Ethiopia as well as those in the diaspora. Key opposition leaders traveled to Europe and North America at the same time public meetings were organized within core opposition constituencies such as Addis Ababa. In September 2005 some CUD leaders, such as Berhanu Nega and Lidetu Ayalew, were urging participation while others, notably Hailu Shewal, were announcing plans to boycott in front of diaspora audiences.²⁰ While the CUD's decision was made in Addis Ababa, important voices from the diaspora clearly had a role in shaping the outcome and tended to push for boycott rather than engagement on the terms offered by the ruling party. When parliament convened in

²⁰ See the comments by Hailu Shawel at American Enterprise Institute, Washington DC, September 16, 2005 available at <http://www.aei.org/events/filter.all.eventID.1204/transcript.asp>. The Ethiopian Review, an opposition website, attacked Berhanu and asked why he "wants to work with the murderous regime of Meles Zenawi." Ethiopian Review, "Berhanu Nega is Going Against the People's Desire," September 21, 2005, found at http://ethiopianreview.homestead.com/001OpinionSep21_2005.html.

October, most UEDF members took their seats, while all but a handful of the CUD boycotted. The EPRDF responded by escalating the conflict, lifting parliamentary immunity for those who boycotted and alleging that top opposition leaders were engaging in treason.

On November 2 and 3 violence exploded across Addis Ababa as confrontations between generally young demonstrators and the Ethiopian military resulted in some 42 deaths. "This is not your run-of-the-mill demonstration. This is an Orange Revolution gone wrong," Meles said, referring to the successful 2004 people's power protests in Ukraine.²¹ The government responded by arresting most of the leadership of the CUD along with private newspaper editors and leaders of several civil society organizations. By bringing these charges against its leading critics, the EPRDF effectively criminalized dissent and sent an unmistakable message that effective opposition would not be tolerated. The *abertura* of 2005 had closed.

On December 19, Ethiopian prosecutors formally charged some 131 opposition politicians, journalists, and civil society leaders with crimes ranging from genocide to treason. In another indication of the influence of the diaspora, seventeen of those indicted were based abroad and included diaspora leaders in North America and Europe. Ethiopian businessmen, intellectuals, opposition party fund raisers, managers of critical websites, and several Voice of America Horn of Africa service reporters were indicted. Amnesty International suggests that "the charges are widely seen as a threat to silence other opposition supporters abroad."²² The charges against the VOA reporters were dropped following pointed public criticism from Washington and several other diaspora leaders had the charges dismissed in April 2007.

The breakdown in the political process in 2005 left the two main opposition coalitions shattered and new divisions both within Ethiopia, in the diaspora, and between Ethiopia and the diaspora.²³ The top CUD leadership was in prison and the question of securing their release absorbed many in the opposition both in Ethiopia and the diaspora. Other elected opposition members of parliament (notably UEDP leader Lidetu who had been a major figure in the CUD) took up their seats but faced virulent criticism and physical threats from the diaspora and their own constituents in Ethiopia for breaking ranks with the imprisoned leaders. The vagaries of exile politics generated controversy over leadership of the North American branch and questions about who really spoke for the CUD remain.

The main UEDF leaders in Ethiopia took up their seats but have faced blistering attacks from influential diaspora leaders and organizations. The largely diaspora-based Executive Committee of the UEDF stripped Beyene Petros and Merera Gudina, the Coalition's chairman and First Vice Chairman respectively, of their party positions in response to their decision to take their seats in parliament.²⁴ The divisions within UEDF have left those seeking a role within political institutions and electoral processes within Ethiopia isolated and unable to operate effectively.

The Ethiopian diaspora has become active in Ethiopian politics in new ways as a result of both the enthusiasm of the May 2005 election and the disillusionment and frustration of the aftermath. The 2005 crisis mobilized many in the diaspora to become

²¹ David Mageria, "Ethiopian Protestors Face Treason Charge," Reuters, November 10, 2005.

²² Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Prisoners of Conscience on Trial for Treason: Opposition Party Leaders, Human Rights Defenders, and Journalists," London, May 2006.

²³ "Confusion among the Opposition," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 1164, January 14, 2006.

²⁴ United Ethiopian Democratic Forces Press Release, October 24, 2005; "UEDF Goes Underground," *Indian Ocean Newsletter* no. 1165, January 21, 2006.

engaged in new ways in homeland politics through fundraising, lobbying, and engaging in political debates. The diaspora has been very effective in raising money and using the internet to mobilize an effective advocacy network that has organized demonstrations and lobbied members of the U.S. Congress, State Department, and World Bank. Organizations such as the Ethiopian Americans Council maintained pressure for passage of the Ethiopia Freedom, Democracy, and Human Rights Act of 2006.²⁵ Diaspora leaders testified before congress, circulated petitions in support of the legislation, and encouraged Ethiopian-Americans to write to their members of Congress. Similar activities took place in Europe, with a particular focus on the European Union. The internet helped link disparate activities and protests around the world into a global campaign.

The EPRDF regime vigorously criticizes the diaspora's response to the post-election crisis and labels its opponents as "extremists." The June 2005 "Diaspora Forum" column published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs characterized those in the diaspora campaigning to discredit the elections as "remnants of the Dergue" and "former Red Terror perpetrators" who are "fanning violence through demonstrations from Atlanta to Amsterdam from Canada to Brussels."²⁶ Consistent with a line of argumentation relating to "hate speech" that appeared toward the end of the campaign, the EPRDF leadership attempted to associate the opposition leadership participating in the electoral process in Ethiopia with elements within the diaspora associated with the abuses of Mengistu Haile Mariam's regime. Later in 2006 and 2007, the government blocked access to opposition websites and political blogs.²⁷

The Ethiopian diaspora therefore played a number of critical roles in the dramatic political events in 2005 and the ongoing crisis through early 2007. The diaspora's ability to frame political debates and act as gatekeeper for opposition strategies made diaspora support for engagement in electoral competition essential for the May 2005 elections. Both major opposition coalitions had links to the diaspora and relied upon supporters abroad for funds, publicity, and advice. Following the controversies and violence over the summer 2005, the diaspora contributed to the decision by the CUD party to boycott the parliament. The EPRDF identified diaspora "extremists" as responsible for much of the political crisis and indicted leading members of the diaspora and blocked access within Ethiopia to opposition blogs based abroad. Ethiopian politics in 2005 were contested by political actors that operated in both the homeland and within the diasporas.

Conclusion

Diaspora groups with their origins in conflict often cultivate a specific type of linkage where homeland territory takes on a high symbolic value and becomes a focal point for mobilization. As a result, diasporas often support militants engaged in homeland conflicts and tend to frame conflicts uncompromising and categorical ways that influence the political strategies of the parties back home. Parties directly engaged in the homeland's conflict depend on diaspora supporters for resources and access to

²⁵ <http://www.eacouncil.org/>

²⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Diaspora Forum: Election and the Diaspora," June 2005, found at www.mfa.gov.et/Press_Section/Newsletters6/DiasporaForum.htm.

²⁷ Among the websites blocked, according to Reporters without Borders (www.rsf.org), were cyberethiopia.com, ethiopianreview.com, tensae.net, quatero.net, ethioforum.org, ethiopianpolitics.blogspot.com, enset.blogspot.com, ethiopundit.blogspot.com, seminawork.blogspot.com, and weichegud.blogspot.com.

international media, international organizations, and powerful host governments, thereby giving diaspora groups' influential roles in the adoption of strategies relating to conflict. The particular importance of symbolic territory and a conception of homeland to diaspora identities and their consequent framing of homeland conflict in categorical, uncompromising terms often prolong conflict. In some cases, as illustrated by the Irish-American case, diaspora groups can cultivate the capacity to promote peace rather than sustaining division.

The case of the Ethiopian diaspora in the United States reflects both the diversity of the community and the critical roles played by those who are most actively engaged in the political struggles in the homeland. Ethiopian politicians perceive the diaspora as a key source of resources, ideas, and leadership. Both the government and the opposition seek to build support within the diaspora and regularly send delegations to brief communities abroad and to use internet and other forms of media to promote their positions. The democratic opening and subsequent crisis in 2005 demonstrated the diasporas potential. The shift of tactics by key diaspora leaders from advocating electoral boycotts to supporting opposition participation was a necessary condition for the competitive elections of May 2005. Without the support of the diaspora key opposition leaders and parties within Ethiopia would not have participated. Following the contentious process of vote counting, allegations of fraud, violent demonstrations, and mass arrests of major opposition politicians and indictments of important diaspora leaders, the diaspora moved away from support for electoral politics and toward lobbying for international financial pressures or even strategies of armed struggle.

References

- Anderson, Benedict. "The New World Disorder." *New Left Review* 193 (1992): 13.
- Appadurai, Arjun. "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology." In Richard G. Fox, ed., *Recapturing Anthropology*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1991.
- Byman, Daniel L., Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, and David Brannan. *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2001.
- Cochrane, Feargal. "Irish-America, the End of the IRA's Armed Struggle, and the Utility of 'Soft Power.'" *Journal of Peace Research* 44:2 (2007): 215-231.
- Cohen, Robin. *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*. London: University College London, 1997.
- Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." Washington, D.C.: World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 2355, 2000.
- Fagen, Patricia Weiss, and Micah N. Bump. *Remittances in Conflict and Crisis: How Remittances Sustain Livelihoods in War, Crises, and Transitions to Peace*. New York: International Peace Academy Policy Paper, February 2006.
- Gow, Greg. *The Oromo in Exile: From the Horn of Africa to the Suburbs of Australia*. Melbourne University Press, 2002.
- Hockenos, Paul. *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism and the Balkan Wars*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Kent, Gregory. "Organised Diaspora Networks and Homeland Peacebuilding: The Bosnian World Diaspora Network as a Potential Development Actor." *Conflict, Security, and Development* 6:3 (October 2006): 449-469.

- Levitt, Peggy. "Social Remittances: Migration-Driven, Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion." *International Migration Review* 32:4 (Winter 1998).
- Lyons, Terrence. "Diasporas and Homeland Conflict." In Miles Kahler and Barbara Walter, eds. *Globalization, Territoriality, and Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Maney, Gregory M. "Transnational Mobilization and Civil Rights in Northern Ireland." *Social Problems* 47:2 (2000).
- Matsuoka, Atsuko, and John Sorenson. *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001.
- Mekuria Bulcha. *The Making of the Oromo Diaspora: A Historical Sociology of Force Migration*. Minneapolis: Kirk House Publishers, 2002.
- Mohamoud, A. A. *Mobilising African Diaspora for the Promotion of Peace in Africa*. Amsterdam: African Diaspora Policy Center, May 2005.
- Naficy, Hamid. "The Poetics and Practice of Iranian Nostalgia in Exile." *Diaspora* 1:3 (Winter 1991): 285-302.
- Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* 1:1 (1991): 89-99.
- Sheffer, Gabriel. *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Zunzer, Wolfram. *Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation*. Berlin: Berghof Occasional Paper no. 26, September 2004.

US involvement in Africa, with special attention paid to Ethiopia as an American ally between 1941 and 1974

Katarzyna Hryćko¹

Post-war American presence in Africa manifested itself *inter alia* by maintaining military stations there. In 1953, the US Government leased such a base from Ethiopia and equipped Ethiopian army to function as a regional substitute of the USA, and protect the region from communist influences. Up to 1970s the Kagnew base was a relay point monitoring the USSR movements in the region, i.e. collecting intelligence information from the continent and the Middle East.

During the World War II Africa was a source of raw materials for the fighting European superpowers. At that time it started to play an important role also in satisfying the needs of the US arms industry. American export to Africa increased in this period by 600%, whereas import to the USA by 250%, Bartkowski (1969: 51). USA was mainly interested in strategic raw materials: columbite, diamonds, copper, tantalum and uranium. Import from Africa contributed considerably to creating American nuclear potential, whereas rubber plantations in Liberia supplied the car industry. Except for Liberia, the American administration had not marked its political presence on the African continent, which by the time when the World War II broke out was almost fully colonized by European superpowers. It was mainly big industrial corporations, trying to secure continuous supply of raw materials, which were responsible for American economic expansion in Africa.

After the World War II, the American administration became interested in keeping Africa, particularly the areas rich in mineral deposits, within the sphere of its political influence. The post-war division of the world into two fighting camps threatened the outbreak of a global conflict. Had it taken place, the Africa's mineral deposits and human resources might have proved to be of strategic importance. However, not only them. Crucial for the USA was also taking over the political influence and creating a network of economic and military relationships in the countries which controlled important trade and transport ways, such as the region of North-East Africa, where an extremely important sea route from the Suez Canal to the straits of Bab el-Mandeb is located. In the event of a conflict in the Middle East, military presence in this region provides an opportunity to control the Mediterranean and the Red Sea both from the land and the air, as well as to freely deploy troops and send food supplies to the area of the military action.

Beginnings of the American presence in North and North-East Africa

In 1942, the allies landed in North Africa, taking control of Morocco and Libya. In Morocco, American troops took over French naval base Port Lyautey, located on the Atlantic coast. Subsequently, they expanded it to such an extent that in the years 1951-

¹ Warsaw University, ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, 00-927 Warszawa, Poland

1960 it constituted their main military bridgehead in the region. It functioned as a platform for US navy activities aimed against submarines. A transport squadron supporting operations of the 6th Fleet stationed there, as well as equipment used to interfere the signal by electronic means. American marines were also redeployed from this base to Lebanese front.

Its air base in North Africa the USA established at Wheelus Fields near Tripoli, a military facility taken over from Germans by the British forces in 1943. Similarly to the base in Morocco, it was used during the Korean war for bombers, fighter planes and tankers. Then, the American Army created a training ground there. The USA leased the base until 1970, when Kaddafi handed it over to the USSR. When fighting on the World War II fronts ended, the American bases were supposed to be indispensable in the event of a war with socialist countries.

However, the USA was mainly interested in Egypt, whose geopolitical location was indeed attractive. Prior to overthrowing King Farouk I, Egypt witnessed fierce competition between America and Great Britain for economic and political influences. The Americans invested in economic aid for Egypt in exchange for licenses for looking for and extracting crude oil. In 1954, Nasser took power. He nationalized the Suez Canal, started to declare open hostility towards Israel and improved relations with the USSR. His politics forced the USA to give up attempting to make an alliance with Egypt.

European superpowers also attempted to maintain and expand their influence in geopolitically and strategically important regions of Africa. British troops contributed to Ethiopia's victory in the war with Italy in the years 1935-1941. Britain's involvements in this war resulted in its taking over protectorate over Eritrea in 1941, and introducing military administration to Ethiopia by virtue of a League of Nations decision. Ethiopian Emperor, Haylä Səllase I, did not trust the British – he was convinced that they were preparing to take over the whole Ethiopia – especially in the context of the bilateral agreement signed in 1942, which was unfavorable to Ethiopia. It actually limited Ethiopian sovereignty, providing Great Britain with a unique opportunity to join vast areas of the British North-East Africa under one administration.

Extending political influence

After the World War II ended, the process of Africa's decolonization started, and it lasted for a few decades. During the cold war era, each newly-established state was forced to be in favor of one of the camps – either the Western countries or the Eastern Bloc. In order to attract newly-independent states to their respective side and make them an ally, both the USSR and USA had to win the trust and support of their elites. Entering into alliances and striking secret deals with the young states was relatively easy for the USA, which, in contrast to the colonial superpowers, was perceived as a country supporting justified aspirations for independence the African states had.

Once the cold war started, military aid became a foreign policy instrument used mainly by the two superpowers. The USA was looking for allies of geopolitical significance which could guarantee strengthening and expanding the defense network against the communist influence. It frequently leant on weak states with which it entered into bilateral defense treaties. They enabled Americans to use the ally's territory and establish there military bases or use the auxiliary facilities offered by the ally. It was to such states that the economic and military aid was directed first of all, and they quickly became dependent on it. In such a way this aid became necessary for the recipient,

guaranteeing the donor continuous access to the bases and providing local governments with the resources for solving economic and political problems resulting from hosting them. In the years 1950-1960, the biggest military aid was granted to: Ethiopia (over USD 37m, whereas the whole continent nearly USD 46m), Tunisia, Libya, Liberia and Morocco, that is the states where the USA exerted the strongest political, economic and military influence, Bartkowski (1969: 94). Later, the aid was granted to an increasingly bigger number of states, but the biggest amounts kept coming to Ethiopia, Morocco and Liberia. In the years 1964-65, Ethiopia received USD 82m from the total sum of USD 142m earmarked by the American Government for military aid for the whole continent, Bartkowski (1969: 94).

As part of bilateral friendship and mutual defense treaties, Americans offered newly-established countries also technological aid and cultural co-operation. In order to achieve this aim USA created development and educational programs, such as Point 4 (technical aid for developing countries) and Peace Corps, an association of young volunteers sent to so-called third world countries, whose task was, among other things, to educate African elites in the spirit of American values. The educational programs were supposed to consolidate capitalist forces confronting the spread of communism.

The biggest interest in Africa after the World War II could be noticed during the J.F. Kennedy's term in office (1961-1963). Prior to being elected President, he held the position of the Chairman of the African Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. Kennedy believed that it is worth investing in Africa, since its future will inevitably affect the future of the USA.

Alliance with Ethiopia

Once the cold war began, Ethiopia belonged to the countries of North-East Africa which were threatened by the communist influence. The communist threat initially lurked in Egypt, but over time the separatist Somali groups started to fall under the Soviet influence. Not only did Nasser have the inclination towards socialism, but he even allied himself with the USSR and took part in the intervention in Yemen. Apart from that, he was an enemy of Israel, an American ally. Thanks to the Eritrean Red Sea coast, Ethiopia could give the USA access to important transport routes of oil tankers in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean. This sea route was one of the key Israeli transport ways. Having its armed forces in the Eritrean base could also give the USA an opportunity to easily conduct an intervention in the Persian Gulf or the rest of the Middle East. Such political calculations shown Ethiopia as an important regional ally and convinced the USA to provide this country with aid. This is a statement of Joseph Simonson, the American ambassador to Ethiopia, made in 1955, which shows how important Kagnew base was for achieving American political objectives in the Horn of Africa: „Although our objectives are primarily political at the present time rather than military, i.e., to maintain the present friendly government in power and to keep it oriented to the West, their attainment will insure the continued availability of U.S. bases in Ethiopia – Kagnew Station at the present time and air naval facilities when and if required”, Agyeman-Duah (1994: 28).

From the economic point of view, Ethiopia could not be a major partner for the USA. The Ethiopian coffee market was completely insignificant to the USA and Ethiopians were too poor to purchase American goods, and, as a result, they could not become an important market for goods manufactured in the USA. Despite the fact that Americans were the main importer of Ethiopian coffee since 1954, they did not perceive Ethiopia

as a trading partner. What confirms this attitude was their refusal to accept a lucrative offer made by the Ethiopian Government which consisted in doing away with all taxes, except for customs duties, for American companies operating in Ethiopia and Ethiopian ones acting in the USA.

The American administration used a number of methods to include potential allies into the sphere of its influence. In the case of Ethiopia it was the model of including an ally as a substitute. The USA entered into a bilateral treaty with Ethiopia and undertook to arm and train its army with a view to enabling it to play the role of a regional substitute for the USA, and, at the same time, protect it against the communist influence. What the American administration was supposed to achieve was to forge close relationships between representatives of the American diplomatic corps in Ethiopia and the elite holding power, thus ensuring uninterrupted access to Ethiopia's territory and its military facilities, and, first of all, to the leased military communications installations. Under Eisenhower administration Ethiopia experienced one of the earliest implementations of what was later referred to as Nixon's doctrine. Protection of regional American interest was handed over to local allies.

However, all scientific sources unanimously agree that it was Ethiopia that first asked for American help before the region found itself in the sphere of American geopolitical interest. Americans were still active on the World War II fronts when Emperor Haylä Səllase I was looking in the USA for the counterbalance to the British presence in Eritrea. President Roosevelt perceived the control the Great Britain extended over Ethiopia, the first to be freed, as too expansive and inconsistent with the newly adopted Atlantic Charter and the Declaration by the United Nations. Such a position of the American President constituted the basis for Ethiopia's talks about co-operation.

Ethiopia had a radio station called Radio Marina, which had been left by the Italians in Eritrea. Americans became interested in it when, in 1942, they were looking for an installation which could intercept intelligence messages sent at a high speed by "Enigma" teleprinter. Communications possibilities of the base impressed American diplomats. Both National Security Agency and CIA were interested in it. Radio Marina met the technical requirements for an intercepting and transmitting station. „What [made] Kagnev so valuable [was] that messages [could] zip in and out of here virtually interference-free. This [was] because the station [was] 7,500 feet above sea level and far away from any major electric complexes. Few places in the world offered those advantages”, Agyeman-Duah (1994: 26). Despite the fact that the British, who temporarily administered Eritrea, were very reluctant about the idea, the American Army Signal Corps finally obtained their approval for using the radio station, and in 1942 the USA opened its consulate in Ethiopia again.

Since 1943 talks were under way between the American administration and Ethiopian delegation, which attempted to secure financial and military aid from the USA in exchange for granting it the right to use the radio station. Initially, the contact was difficult due to the fact that the Emperor was obliged to consult all of his meetings with representatives of other countries with the British administration. Therefore, the meetings with American delegates were kept secret and took place outside Ethiopia's territory. Ethiopians insisted on military aid for which they promised to extend the period in which Americans could use Radio Marina. The talks prolonged, lasted for years and Americans were unwilling to give aid to Ethiopia as they did not see clear interests in this country. They had problems to solve in Asia and Europe, and the only

thing they were interested in in Ethiopia was the communications base, which was very well-located (apparently it was difficult to find such a convenient location elsewhere in the area). The price for it did seem to be too high. For a long time the US State Department was not able to take a definite stand on the costs it was prepared to incur in exchange for American presence in Ethiopia.

At the beginning, in the second half of the 1940s, the American administration recognized that Ethiopia met the necessary conditions to receive aid under the Lend-Lease Act, which authorized the American President to grant aid only to those countries which belonged to the anti-Nazi coalition. Americans decided that they would earmark funds for the Ethiopian air transportation, which was at that time controlled by the British administration, and supplied a small number of aircraft with the crew which were supposed to improve domestic transport. They hoped that investing in the airlines would help obtain permission for setting up American air bases there. The aircraft were followed by agreements for uniforms, cotton goods, rifles, automatic machine guns, artillery, passenger cars and lorries. As part of Foreign Economic Assistance (later transformed into Agency for International Development - AID) a technical mission was sent to Ethiopia, whose task was to assess Ethiopia's economic, agricultural and mineral potential. On the basis of the expert opinions prepared by the mission's members, economic projects were prepared to be later implemented by the Emperor's Government. In 1945, negotiations between Transcontinental and Western Air (TWA) and the Ethiopian Government started on creating an airline. TWA was to take over managing Ethiopian Airlines. The agreement was concluded in September 1945. For the next years pilots of American Air Force worked for the Ethiopian airline and trained its personnel, thus building the airline's reputation and contributing to the flight safety.

From 1946 on, the issue of the future of Italian colonies in Africa was discussed at the United Nations. The priority for Ethiopia was to incorporate administered by Great Britain Eritrea as a part of the country. Such a solution would enable Ethiopia to gain access to the sea. In 1950, after four years of looking into various solutions to the problem by the UN, the US State Department decided to support the idea of joining Eritrea to the Ethiopian state, thus ensuring that American forces would be present in the base near Asmara for many years. American diplomats decided to make that move only when the British openly declared that they were going to withdraw from Eritrea. It became obvious to the American administration that they needed a trusted and friendly administrator of the land they used, and finally accepted the idea that from the point of view of American interests it was Ethiopia that would be the most appropriate in this role. In return for this support, Ethiopia promised to send a 1000-soldier contingent to Korea. In its honor Radio Marina was later renamed to Kagnaw (reconnaissance). However, Ethiopia did not agree on installing foreign troops on its territory without the promise to arm the country. Americans put off declarations of taking up co-operation, and in 1952 Ethiopia took over control over Eritrea without granting the USA permission for using Radio Marina.

Finally, in 1953, under the pressure of the Ethiopian side, bilateral mutual defense treaties were signed, and so was a very favorable agreement, guaranteeing the American side access to Eritrean radio installations for 25 years (it was the Americans that insisted on such a long period). In return, the Department of State and the Pentagon undertook to provide Ethiopia with military and technical aid, making it clear that they would take responsibility neither for internal nor external safety of Ethiopia, nor even for the safety of the installations located in the Radio Marina station. The American side did not

accept any arguments indicating that the presence of its armed forces could pose a threat for Ethiopia's external safety. A standard treaty regulating arms and technical equipment supplies was signed. The treaty also provided for creating Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Ethiopia. Washington agreed to equip and train three 6,000-soldier divisions for approximately USD 5m.

Signing the mutual defense treaty by both parties made Ethiopia, the main recipient of the American aid on the African continent, the biggest military power in Africa at the time when almost the whole continent remained under colonial rule. When African countries only gained independence, Ethiopia was much ahead of them in terms of military power. Thanks to the agreement, the USA had a guaranteed access to Ethiopian land, sea and air installations, as well as to open sky over Ethiopian territory. The Americans could use the warehouses and military facilities and the port in Massaua, where the American Navy had its headquarters. They could take measurements from the air, on condition that Ethiopian authorities would receive copies of all the data gathered together with the explanatory notes. All remaining privileges, including using Ethiopia's territory, required the Government's consent. The USA demanded the extraterritorial status for its personnel, for which the Ethiopians did not agree. Apart from the financial aid, the USA was to support Ethiopia politically, but only in the event of a situation in which American interests related to leasing the base would be at risk.

The extended and gradually upgraded communications base seemed to be the main and probably the only benefit Americans derived from their presence in Ethiopia and *de facto* the chief reason for which the American Government decided to invest in this country. Over the course of time, the station started to play an extremely important role in the global US security communications network extending between Morocco and the Philippines. At the end of the 1950s, the installations were used for communication with Polaris submarines, which operated in the Indian Ocean and carried ballistic missiles, as well as for monitoring Soviet movements in the region – the station collected intelligence information from the continent and the Middle East. The base played an important role during the military operations in Korea and Vietnam. It was also used for diplomatic purposes, that is it functioned as a communications center for American embassies in Africa. Kagnew became the ground base for satellite defense communications systems. Thanks to the fact that its transmitters were conveniently situated geographically, the base was also used for NATO purposes, when technical and radio problems made communication in the Western Europe impossible.

The bilateral co-operation was not easy. The Emperor tended to overrate Ethiopia's significance for the American geopolitical strategy and at any occasion appealed for more aid. Washington did not see the reason why it should pay more than was specified in the agreements. Nevertheless, even the aid which had been agreed with the USA reached Ethiopia very slowly. The Department of State was inclined to create a more or less permanent program of arming Ethiopia, but the Pentagon was still reluctant about the idea of getting militarily involved in the Horn of Africa. The main bone of contention was the manner in which the USA carried out the aid projects. The supplies were divided into tranches which frequently reached their recipients with significant delays. In response to the bitterness of the Ethiopian Government officials, who accused the USA of neglecting the alliance, representatives of the American administration reminded them of the fact that the USA was involved in numerous interests all over the world and its reserves were not unlimited. Ethiopia threatened to appeal for money

elsewhere and begin talks with the enemy, since the USA exposed it to danger and the aid was still not coming.

The Department of State's attitude towards Ethiopia changed depending on the balance of power in the cold war world, the situation in the Middle East, in the Horn of Africa and on the politician who at a given time headed it. It was not until the Suez crisis in 1956, when the Americans finally had to verify their plans of forging an alliance with Egypt, that Ethiopia received the aid in the quantity and of the type it had expected. In the 1960s, i.e. the period of the biggest interest in the de-colonized Africa, the Department of State also increased its involvement in Ethiopia, which was exemplified by the implementation of advisory programs for the Government in Addis Ababa and for the Ethiopian army. Thousands of volunteers were sent to Ethiopia as part of the Peace Corps program. Young Ethiopians were willing to take over American cultural patterns, which, however, sparked off protests from conservative circles and left-leaning groups opposing the promotion of the American culture. Actually, the program was supposed to eliminate such left-wing circles and groups.

It seems that the bilateral treaty was too costly for both parties. The USA paid in the form of military aid much more than Kagnew was actually worth, whereas Ethiopia paid a high price in the form of hostility of Arab countries and hate of the Somali Government. Siad Barre allied himself with the Soviets and offered their armed forces for a military base in Berbera, which outclassed the Kagnew base in terms of technical parameters.

Until the 1950s, the British presence in the region protected Ethiopia against Muslim antagonisms in the Middle East. Once Ethiopia took control over Eritrea, that shield disappeared. Since the mid 1950s, the Muslim countries, such as Syria and Iraq, headed by Egypt and sponsored by the Soviets, conducted a propaganda and infiltration campaign against Ethiopia. It was exemplified by calling to create so-called Great Somalia, enlarged, among other territories, by Ethiopian Ogaden, supporting Eritrea's struggle for independence and sovereignty. In the 1960s, the American military aid for Ethiopia gave the USSR the pretext to arm its neighbors and enemies.

In 1970 Nasser died and the new Egyptian Government changed the political course, adopting a pro-Western policy. It finally, after many years of futile efforts, enabled the USA to form an alliance with this country. The growing needs of the Ethiopian army enlarged by the Emperor for fear of a Somali invasion ceased to coincide with the American aspirations. The intensifying fighting in Eritrea, Somali infiltration in Ogaden, Soviet presence in Somalia, aging emperor, who was unable to control the machinery of the state, and, on top of that, beginnings of the satellite communication in the 1970s, pushed the USA to withdraw from Ethiopia. The period when Ethiopia was geopolitically attractive for the USA ended. The Americans moved their base to Diego Garcia Island on the Indian Ocean, which was a more convenient location and constituted an alternative for Kagnew in terms of the strategic safety in the region. The American administration officially informed Ethiopia of this fact in 1973, five years before expiry of the bilateral agreement, Spencer (1984: 322). Ethiopia, impoverished by the civil war and threatened with a conflict with Somalia, was left at the mercy of the USSR and thus it fell into a trap of communism. When the emperor was dethroned in 1974, the American ambassador had already left the country.

Bibliography

- Agyeman-Duah Baffour. 1994. *The United States and Ethiopia. Military Assistance and the Quest for Security 1953-1993*. University Press of America.
- Bartkowski Tadeusz (ed.). 1969. *Stany Zjednoczone a Afryka*. PISM: Książka i Wiedza.
- Bereket Habte Selassie. 1984. "The American Dilemma on the Horn". In: *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 22(2), pp. 249-272.
- Lefebvre Jeffrey A. 1991. *Arms for the Horn. U.S. Security Policy in Ethiopia and Somalia 1953-1991*. University of Pittsburgh Press
- Lemmu Baisa. 1989. "United States Military Assistance to Ethiopia, 1953-1974: A Reappraisal of a Difficult Patron-Client Relationship". In: *Northeast African Studies*, Vol. 11(3), pp. 51-70.
- Marcus Harold G. 1982. "American Security and Ethiopia, 1948-1953". In: *Proceedings of the 7th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*
- Marcus Harold G. 1983. *Ethiopia, Great Britain and the United States, 1941-1974*. University of California Press.
- Mutual Defense Assistance. *Agreement between the United States of America and Ethiopia*. 1953.
- Ottaway Marina. 1982. *Soviet and American Influence in the Horn of Africa*. New York.
- Remnek Richard B. 1990. "The Strategic Importance of the Bab el-Mandeb and the Horn of Africa". In: *Naval War College Review*, Vol. XLIII(4), pp. 6-30.
- Spencer John. 1984. *Ethiopia at Bay. A Personal Account of the Haile Sellassie Years*. Reference Publications, Inc.
- "U.S. Policy and Request for Sale of Arms to Ethiopia". 1975. In: *Hearings before the Subcommittee on International, Political and Military Affairs of the Committee of Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 94 Congress*.
- "U.S. Relations with Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa". 1976. *Hearings before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee in Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 94 Congress*.

Regional Security Complex with Ethiopia as the Source of Eritrea's Defense Policy

Scarlett Lopez Freeman¹

Eritrea's choice of defense policy has been shaped by a number of internal and external factors. Internal factors include the political-bureaucratic modeling of Eritrea as an authoritarian, militaristic state and the economic constraints that Eritrea faces as a poor country. Externally, one can examine the regional security complex with Ethiopia; once characterized by an amicable relationship between the two heads of state, it is now one of hostility. The regional security complex with Ethiopia heavily outweighs the internal factors when it comes to Eritrea's defense policy. As I will argue, the regional security complex is at the root of Eritrea's defense policy.

An Overview: Eritrea's Defense Policy

Eritrea maintains an aggressive foreign policy,² characterized by deteriorated and poor relations with neighbors, and is furthermore not favorable to multilateral institutions.³ Its largest threat emanates from Ethiopia, Eritrea's neighbor to the south, which poses a threat to Eritrea's border and sovereignty.⁴ The demarcation of the border remains under dispute with troops occasionally amassing on both sides of the border.⁵

Politically, Eritrea has been attempting to develop and/or strengthen its ties to the Arab world.⁶ Eritrea is a member of Libyan-initiated Community of Sahel-Sahara States (CEN-SAD) and Libya has reportedly supplied surface-to-air missiles to Eritrea.⁷ Eritrea has also twice applied for observer status with the League of Arab States.⁸ Other attempts include the supplying of arms to Somalia's Union of Islamic Courts, to counteract Ethiopia's US-backed support of the Somali Transitional Federal Government.⁹

¹ School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University in the City of New York, New York, NY, USA.

² Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*. <http://www8.janes.com/arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/erits010.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=eritrea%20executive%20summary&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&>>.

³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - North Africa. 30 October 2006. *External Affairs, Eritrea*. <http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/erits080.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=eritrea%20external%20affairs&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&>>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment - North Africa. 30 October 2006. *External Affairs, Eritrea*.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

David's theory of omnibalancing, is described as states accounting for *all* threats, internal and external, in order to "survive in power."¹⁰ In the case of Eritrea, internal threats are minimal due to the stronghold of power by President Isaias Afewerki,¹¹ so omnibalancing is not applicable to Eritrea. Walt describes balancing as "allying with others against the prevailing threat."¹² In order to counteract its largest threat, Ethiopia, which is a US ally against Islamic fundamentalism,¹³ Eritrea's strategy is to align with the Arab world in order to balance against Ethiopia.

The war with Ethiopia was largely characterized by experienced guerilla tactics as well as fighting positional battles¹⁴ (a static border defense doctrine).¹⁵ Cohen states that most Third World states lack the infrastructure to engage in blitzkrieg warfare but that they do have the ability to engage in long periods of low-level conflict characterized by episodes of intense fighting.¹⁶ With a paucity of advanced military equipment,¹⁷ Eritrea is currently resigned to a limited aims war offensive doctrine with potential for aspects of mainforce attrition,¹⁸ which is congruent with its history of a guerilla army moving towards conventional warfare.¹⁹ Eritrea retains goals of limited aims war—territorial aims, no unconditional surrender, political not military victory²⁰—with some strategies of mainforce attrition—no surprise, numerical superiority (estimated 200,000 personnel versus Ethiopia's estimated 150,000²¹), and set piece battles.²²

Eritrea does not possess chemical, biological or nuclear weapons.²³ Although nuclear weapons are considered to be central to international security affairs and are predicted to increase in importance in the coming years,²⁴ Eritrea's disincentives outweigh its incentives to the development or procurement of nuclear weapons capabilities. Its primary disincentive is the Hawk's dilemma. That is, it is extremely expensive to

¹⁰ David, Steven R. January 1991. "Explaining Third World Alignment," *World Politics*, Vol. 43, No. 2, p. 236.

¹¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

¹² Walt, Stephen M. 1987. "Alliance: Balancing and Bandwagoning," *The Origins of Alliances*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY. p. 96.

¹³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 29 March 2007. *External Affairs, Ethiopia*. <http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/ethis080.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=tank&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&keyword=#toclink-j0011010011719>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Neuman, Stephanie. 8 February 2007. "Types of Defense Doctrine," Lecture Handout, Columbia University.

¹⁶ Coehn, Eliot A. 1987. "Distant Battles," in *The Lessons of Recent Wars in the Third World, Vol. II: Comparative Dimensions*, eds. S. Neuman and R. Harkavy. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books. p. 17.

¹⁷ Jane's World Armies. 1 August 2006. *World Armies, Eritrea*. <http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwar/jwara150.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=eritrea%20world%20armies&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JWAR&>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Neuman, Stephanie. 8 February 2007. "Types of Offensive Doctrine," Lecture Handout, Columbia University.

²¹ Jane's World Armies. 26 October 2006. *World Armies, Ethiopia*. <http://www8.janes.com.arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwar/jwara152.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=world%20armies%20ethiopia&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JWAR&>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 18 March 2005. *Armed Forces, Eritrea*. <http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/erits100.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=tank&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&keyword=>>.

²⁴ Goldstein, Avery. 20 September 2000. "Why Nukes Still Trump: Deterrence and Security in the 21st Century," talk delivered at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, PA. pp. 1-2.

develop nuclear weapons compared to the development of conventional military capabilities; thus, development of nuclear weapons leaves conventional weapons capabilities vulnerable to deterioration which in turn leaves a country vulnerable to outside attack during the time in which the nuclear program is developing.²⁵

Although chemical weapons may be delivered through chemically-armed ballistic missiles, chemical weapons use during World War I degraded combat effectiveness and reduces tactical mobility,²⁶ something that Eritrea relies heavily on.²⁷ In terms of biological weapons for Eritrea, they are indeed cheap at a casualty cost of only \$1 per square kilometer versus \$2,000 for conventional weapons, although access to delivery systems²⁸ may prove more of an economic obstacle for Eritrea's budget. Due to the constraints that Eritrea currently faces, nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons are not a viable military option in the near future.

Political Bureaucratic Factors and Eritrea's Defense Policy

Internally, Eritrea's authoritarian government and military are closely related and exercise strict control over all aspects of civil life.²⁹ According to Frisch, what determines a third world state's security structure is a result of the state's "political and social heterogeneity and the state's relative importance to United States foreign policy and security concerns."³⁰ He goes on to say that states that value external security [over internal] will establish a "conventional army with both conventional and unconventional offensive capabilities."³¹ Although Eritrea does not have unconventional offensive capabilities, it does boast a large conventional army.³²

According to Frisch, the heterogeneity of Eritrean society and absence of US protection has prevented fragmentation of security forces, which is disadvantageous both militarily and politically.³³ Despite internal armed opposition to the current regime and the linguistic and ethnic diversity of Eritrean society, the government has quelled potential fragmentation through militarily homogenizing a plural society.³⁴ Posen says that the disjuncture between civilians and military organizations can be problematic,³⁵ but as the most militarized society in Africa with one out of seven adults under arms,³⁶ Eritrea has successfully reduced the chances of unwanted civilian interference into military affairs simply by integrating such a large percentage of the civilian population into the military.

²⁵ Neuman, Stephanie. 28 February 2007. Unconventional Military Options, Lecture, Columbia University.

²⁶ McNaugher, Thomas L. Fall 1990. "Ballistic Missiles and Chemical Weapons," *International Security* 15:2. p. 26.

²⁷ Jane's World Armies. 1 August 2006. *World Armies, Eritrea*.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*. <<http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/erits010.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=tank&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&ProdName=NAFRS&keyword=#toclink-j0011010009472>>.

³⁰ Frisch, Hillel. September 2002. "Explaining Third World Security Systems," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3. p. 161.

³¹ Ibid., p. 162.

³² Jane's World Armies, 1 August 2006. *World Armies, Eritrea*.

³³ Frisch, p. 184.

³⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

³⁵ Posen, Barry. 1984. *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p. 58.

³⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

Domestic Economic Factors and Eritrea's Defense Policy

In 2003, Eritrea's defense expenditure was an estimated US\$180 million, the highest in the world in terms of GDP percentage (see Table 1, below) with, perhaps, the exception of North Korea.³⁷ Nevertheless, Eritrea is a poor country with low foreign reserves and an overvalued currency that faces socioeconomic crisis and famine.³⁸ Despite recent attempts to distance itself from foreign aid (expelling USAID),³⁹ Eritrea remains entirely dependent on foreign assistance simply to feed its population.⁴⁰

Table 1: Defense Expenditures⁴¹

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
US\$ (millions)	262	271	231	173	150	180
Percentage of GDP	35.0	37.2	35.8	24.2	23.3	24.5

Note: Figures for 2003 are estimates.

Due to Eritrea's worsening economic condition,⁴² its current military equipment is mostly that which was procured prior to and during the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia.⁴³ There are reported attempts at investing in logistical technology.⁴⁴ It has also been suggested that Eritrea has a major record of covert procurement.⁴⁵

Eritrea would benefit from modern military equipment, particularly because its largest threat, Ethiopia, has been heavily supported by the US in terms of training and sale of weaponry.⁴⁶ There has also been a suggestion of an ongoing arms race with Ethiopia, based on military spending between the two countries.⁴⁷

With its prime threat being assisted by the US, it would be beneficial for Eritrea to pursue unconventional military options.⁴⁸ However, as stated above, it is constrained prevented by budgetary constraints as defined by the Hawk's dilemma. Thus it has chosen to invest primarily in conventional military options, which also defines its doctrine.⁴⁹

During the 1990s, there was increased economic interdependence between Eritrea and Ethiopia, which was one reason that fueled the 1998-2000 war with Ethiopia.⁵⁰ In an attempt to assert independence, Eritrea dropped the Ethiopian birr and in November

³⁷ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 18 March 2005. *Defence Budget, Eritrea*, <http://www8.janes.com/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/erits090.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=tank&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&keyword=>>.

³⁸ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

³⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 29 March 2007. *External Affairs, Ethiopia*.

⁴⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

⁴¹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 18 March 2005. *Defence Budget, Eritrea*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Jane's World Armies. 1 August 2006. *World Armies, Eritrea*.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 22 February 2007. *Executive Summary, Ethiopia*. <http://www8.janes.com.arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/ethis010.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=ethiopia%20executive%20summary&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&#toclink-j0011010010948>>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Neuman, Stephanie. 28 February 2007. "Unconventional Military Options," Lecture, Columbia University.

⁴⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

⁵⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *External Affairs, Eritrea*.

1997 adopted the Eritrean *nafka*.⁵¹ This was a major source of friction between the two countries in addition to the border dispute.⁵²

Regional Dynamics

A regional security complex is a system of security relations among a set of geographically proximate states and can be “identified in terms of patterns of amity and enmity.”⁵³ The regional security complex between Eritrea and neighboring Ethiopia is one particularly of enmity but with a strange history of amity between the two state leaders.⁵⁴ President Afewerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi “are closely related and were apparently good friends during their days in the resistance, sharing the same room when they lived in Mogadishu.”⁵⁵

Buzan describes two conditions that explain why it could be difficult to see a security complex within a region: (1) There are weak, local states whose power does not project very much beyond state boundaries, and (2) That the presence of outside powers in a region is strong enough to suppress or diminish the perception of importance of security dynamics among the local states.⁵⁶ In the regional security complex between Eritrea and Ethiopia, it seems logical to assume that the defense policy of Eritrea is a function of the international system rather than regional dynamics. However, I argue that the regional security complex between Eritrea and Ethiopia dominates the defense policy of Eritrea and, furthermore, strongly informs how Eritrea interacts in the international system.

Eritrea and Ethiopia are both seen as weak local states,⁵⁷ and their relationship has been suppressed by the “substantial long-term stationing of military forces by outside powers in the region,”⁵⁸ namely the US (and France's) military operations based in Djibouti have made the Horn of Africa relevant in terms of the US-led war on terror,⁵⁹ suppressing the local dynamics of the Ethiopia-Eritrea regional security complex.

Domestic vs. External Factors

External factors heavily outweigh the affects of domestic factors, as Eritrea's authoritarian government has so far subdued and continues to subdue internal threats through the prohibition of ethnic, religious, and regionalist parties and the ruling party's ownership in most sectors of the economy.⁶⁰ One can even analyze the domestic factors

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Buzan, Barry. 1992. “Third World Regional Security in Structural and Historical Perspective,” in *The Insecurity Dilemma*, ed. Brian L. Job. Lynne Rienner Publishers. p. 169.

⁵⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 29 March 2007. *External Affairs, Ethiopia*.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Buzan, p. 174.

⁵⁷ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*, and Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 22 February 2007. *Executive Summary, Ethiopia*.

⁵⁸ Buzan, p. 194.

⁵⁹ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 22 March 2007. *External Affairs, Djibouti*, <http://www8.janes.com.arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/djibs080.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=djibouti%20external%20affairs&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&=>>.

⁶⁰ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Internal Affairs, Eritrea*, <http://www8.janes.com.arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/sent/nafrsu/erits070.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=tank&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=NAFRS&keyword=>>.

as directed by the regional security complex with Ethiopia. For example, the militarized society and stronghold on power by the government does not seem like it will change, as continued tensions with Ethiopia have deferred demobilization plans announced in 2004.⁶¹ There were reports of large-scale conscription and recruitment of youth into military service into 2005.⁶² Thus, the regional security complex directs Eritrea's defense policy decisions in terms of Eritrea's political-bureaucratic characteristics.

Even economic decisions are dominated by the regional security complex with Ethiopia. There is high military spending even as the Eritrean population faces food shortages.⁶³ The reasons for expelling USAID in spite of Eritrea's dire need for aid is unclear, but subsequent restrictions on UNMEE operations and expelling of Western UN personnel⁶⁴ suggest that the unresolved border dispute with Ethiopia is behind Eritrea's decisions.

Although it may seem as though the international system is an important factor in Eritrea's choice of defense policy, it is only important as far as the regional security complex goes. I contend that Eritrea's attempt to strengthen ties to the Arab world⁶⁵ is only relevant in terms of its importance regarding the border demarcation issue. Otherwise, Eritrea would engage on a larger scale in multilateral institutions, which it does not.⁶⁶ Eritrea's balancing against western countries is an expression of frustration with the perceived international community's lack of pressure on Ethiopia to accept the 2002 ruling that awarded the town of Badme to Eritrea.⁶⁷ Eritrea believes that the UN has not given due priority to resolving the border dispute and that Ethiopia is the more favored of the two countries.⁶⁸ Thus, Eritrea's interaction with the international system stems from the regional security complex.

External factors such as technology do not heavily affect Eritrea's defense policy, primarily because it is economically unfeasible (Hawk's dilemma) to pursue technology beyond conventional equipment.⁶⁹ Eritrea's primary threat, Ethiopia, has not pursued any post-war modernization policies⁷⁰ and the war fought between the two was a high-intensity conventional war.⁷¹ In light of this, it does not seem likely that the Eritrean army will need to engage in countermeasures against the Ethiopian military which is also not significantly modernizing.

Conclusion

Based on the presented facts, the regional security complex between Eritrea and Ethiopia is at the heart of Eritrea's defense policy. The use of the Horn of Africa as the US's battlefield in the war on terror has suppressed the external perception of this

⁶¹ Jane's World Armies. 1 August 2006. *World Armies, Eritrea*.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Internal Affairs, Eritrea*.

⁶⁴ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *External Affairs, Eritrea*.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *Executive Summary, Eritrea*.

⁶⁷ Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment – North Africa. 30 October 2006. *External Affairs, Eritrea*.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Neuman, Stephanie. 28 February 2007. "Unconventional Military Options," Lecture, Columbia University.

⁷⁰ Jane's World Armies. 26 October 2006. *World Armies, Ethiopia*.

<http://www8.janes.com.arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwar/jwara152.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&keyword=ethiopia%20world%20armies&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JWAR&>.

⁷¹ Jane's World Armies. 1 August 2006. *World Armies, Eritrea*.

security dynamic. Although other factors are accounted for in the development of Eritrea's defense policy, it is evident that the regional security complex with Ethiopia disproportionally directs Eritrea's defense policy from a number of angles.

Legal institutional hierarchies, justice and social order in Gurage area of Ethiopia

Getinet Assefa Gadena¹

Legal systems/forms do not exist in separation and creating dichotomy between them, particularly *traditional* and *modern*, may not help to understand the complex processes and socio-political contexts in which people attempt to achieve order and manage disorder. The paper explores multiple legal institutions and practices in *Gurageland* connected to local and supra-local frameworks. It then points attention to the importance of analysing the processes in which legal structural hierarchies develop and how people negotiate legal and popular justice through a simultaneous engagement with the different legal forms, formal/modern and popular/traditional.

Introduction

Extrapolation of figures from the 1994 census and growth rate reports of the National Statistical Office show that the people referred to as the *Gurage* make up an estimated 3.5 million out of the total national population of around 75 million now. The *Gurage* consists of various linguistic sub-groups found in the central South-western part of Ethiopia. Among three main sub-groups this paper deals with the *Sebat-bet Gurage* found in the western part of *Gurageland* – the two other sub-groups being the Northern *Kistane* cluster and the Eastern *Silte*-speaking cluster (cf. Leslau, 1952, Bahru, 2002:19-20). The *Silte* have recently asserted their own non-*Gurage* identity and set-up a new politico-administrative unit at equal status with the *Gurage* Zone in the Southern Region. The majority agriculturalist *Gurage* live in the rural *Gurageland*, settled in kin-group villages, while a number of them are engaged in various petty-trade and small to large business ventures in other parts of the country.

A feature of *Gurageland* is that *traditional* institutions operate to administer affairs of societal members side by side structures of *the modern*² state agencies. The latter are introduced to the area since its incorporation into the central Ethiopian state as of 1889. The traditional institutions take organisational forms based mainly on councils of elders set up at different levels from neighbourhood/village to clan/tribal levels. Their purpose is to set and enforce norms and rules governing aspects of life ranging from simple socio-economic relations between individuals to wider community, local and regional

¹ PhD Student - Martin-Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg (MLU) and Research Associate at Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (MPI), Halle-Germany. E-mail: assefa@eth.mpg.de or getudori@yahoo.com

² Interpretations of the terms *traditional* and *modern* differ and are points of contention between different writers and practitioners. In this paper, *tradition* is used to refer to institutional forms and social practices based on cultural patterns, norms and rules predating state authority with its bureaucratic concepts, which often is considered to be *modern*. The term *customary* is often used as a synonym for *traditional*. In line with the above definition, *traditional laws* exhibit differences from *customary laws* in that the latter are often recognized as constructs of formal state juridical institutions as was the case in colonial states (cf. Moore, 2001).

issues. Settlement of disputes and management of conflict aimed at obtaining justice and social order among community groups and members is one area in which these institutions are engaged. These institutional forms are ubiquitous and are identified with various names among different groups of people throughout the country – to mention only few, *Yejoka* of the Western *Sebat-bet Gurage* cluster; *sera* among the *Gordana*, *Silte*, *Masqan*, *Dobbi*, *Kambata* and other people; *gada*, *gabalaa* of various *Oromo* groups; *Dulata* among the *Gamo* people. While these traditional institutions operate at different levels in different areas, among the *Sebat-bet Gurage* the system is organised at neighbourhood/village, sub-clan, clan, and tribal/regional levels.

There is consensus among academics, policy makers and practitioners that studies on the varied nature, functions and interactions of traditional institutions with other institutions in the state and non-state sector do not match their ubiquity and relevance for people's daily life and overall development of institutions in the country (cf. Bahru, 2002; Getinet, 1999.) Against this background, this paper deals with issues related to traditional institutions and their relevance for current studies. It describes the legal institutional landscape in *Gurageland* and the historical development of legal hierarchies and inequalities. It also reflects on justice and maintenance of order, which people try to achieve through processes of negotiation that involve multiple legal systems and community groups and members.

Traditional legal institutions in *Gurageland* and their relevance for current studies

At a glance, the centuries of history of traditional systems of governance in *Gurageland* and the rest of Ethiopia to date seems to suggest that societies with recent history of centralised state have forms of social control other than those with relatively long history of state bureaucracy that have *modern* institutions of law. One such sociological theory is provided by Perrow (1991), whose thesis in 'society of organisations' is that large and complex organisations are the key to orderly management of social, political and economic activities. Perrow reasons out that large organisations have absorbed society, where, among other things, 'activities that once were performed by relatively autonomous and usually small informal groups (e.g. family, neighbourhood) and small autonomous organisations [small businesses, local government, local church, voluntary organisations] are now performed by large bureaucracies' (p. 727).

The fact that the present day legal landscape in most parts of Ethiopia is made up of multiple forms of legal systems (traditional, modern, religious) raises the observer's interest to revisit the distinction drawn between the so called 'large organisations' and 'small informal groups' involved in the maintenance of social order. According to Perrow's theory, *traditional* ethnic-based, community institutions such as the ones found in *Gurageland* are nothing but 'the source of friends and marriage partners, counselling,...recreation facilities..., apprenticeship training... and retirement options' (Ibid). I argue that, firstly, such is a narrow characterisation of institutional arrangements outside the realm of government bureaucracies based on (limited) observation in industrialised societies. The situation in rural *Gurageland* and elsewhere shows that traditional, informal and non-state institutions are involved in providing wide ranging services similarly to those of formal bureaucracies. An example is settlement of conflict, adjudication of disputes, redress of damages, and maintenance of contractual relationships through institutional arrangements outside formal legal structures.

The existence of complex problems of development and governance as ones faced by present-day Ethiopians warrants that the root causes of the problems be understood and effectively tackled. Thus, there needs to be "... a deeper understanding of the formal and informal political, economic and social power structures and power relations in Ethiopian society as well as their implications for development..." (Vaughan & Tronvoll, 2003) The various types of livelihood strategies adopted by people in various parts of Ethiopia today exhibit the multitude institutional arrangements and the complex nature of the processes in which they are maintained. For many generations of Ethiopians to date, effective governance structures and meaningful processes have been mere dreams, and the systems introduced so far have remained, again in the words of Vaughan & Tronvoll (after Levine), in their 'waxen' forms. Analysis needs to go beyond the formal constitutional and institutional provisions to "... illuminate [their] golden [side]: the relations and systems of power and convention which underpin and give [them] life and meaning" (Ibid).

Secondly, the example of traditional institutions like the *Yejoka*³, *Geyz*⁴, *Mazoya*⁵, which have co-existed with the local formal security and justice systems shows that both *formal* and *informal* institutions should be understood as operating within a system of plural legal orders, oftentimes interacting with each other. Within the hierarchically organised lineage-based traditional judiciary systems, community members have dealt with disputes and conflicts by classifying them at different levels on the basis of severity and groups involved. Since the incorporation of *Gurageland* into the centralised Ethiopian system starting 1889, the *Gurage* people have defined and continually redefined disputes, conflicts and other social issues by types and levels or severity so that they can be dealt with by the traditional system and/or the *modern* state system.

Closer examination of the historical processes in which the *Gurage* traditional systems have developed shows the importance of analysing the directions of changes in institutional forms. In this regard, existing theory, as represented by Perrow's organisational theory, shows weaknesses in two ways. One change process that needs to be revisited takes the form of small groups or informal institutions losing their autonomy and actually disappearing as a result of a deliberate or unwitting process of absorption by larger ones, in which case "their functions survive under the control or auspices of centralised bureaucracies and shaped by the needs of those formal organisations" (p. 728). However, this is not always the case, and even in highly industrialised countries, the functions of small organisations and institutions persist and despite the increase in their size large organisations cannot takeover all of these functions. As we read in Winston (2001), even in the U.S.A today, what he calls "good order and workable social arrangements" centre on a variety of processes and forms of legal order, which include adjudication, mediation, contract, legislation, elections and administration or managerial decisions. Therefore, smaller social groups such as kin-groups, local associations, extended families, and informal neighbourhood groups are relevant in both Western and non-Western societies because the issues and problems they dealt with still persist at national, community, neighbourhood and family levels.

³ A collection of the traditional laws of the *Sebat-bet Gurage*. Unless stated contextually, in this paper *Gurage* is understood as *Sebate-bet Gurage* and *Gurage* people as *Sebat-ber Gurage* people.

⁴ Cf. Getinet, 2005.

⁵ A traditional system of security through which a rotating responsibility for night-shift guarding of houses and neighbourhoods is operationalised (Cf. Getinet, 2008).

In terms of legal forms, one needs to understand not only the field of the law, which in the words of Donald Black, represents “the normative life of the state and its citizens, such as legislation, litigation, and adjudication [but also] the everyday life of people... in their private spheres” (1980:2.) The latter makes up the ‘normative aspect of social life’ and is controlled by social norms and practices that make up other regulatory forces within society. The importance of making a distinction between laws and norms lies in the common observation that rules alone don’t work and that the authority of law that is based on coercive threats does not provide effective social order. Law is applied as a response to human conducts that are found to be deviant, in which case social control takes the form of administration of sanctions. But the maintenance of order takes more than punishing deviant behaviour and calls for popular governance structures and processes that are widely accepted and supported by societal members. Thus, it becomes important to focus on processes and practices that form contexts for popular understandings, expectations, purposes, and principles for actors participating in and dealing with different cases. It is expected that closer understanding of structures and processes of people’s engagement with formal and traditional legal forms in *Gurageland* can contribute towards ensuring more inclusive, responsive and effective service provision to people.

Finally, the sense of social order enshrined in the formal (governmental) legal institutions may appear to be “a more complex, rigid and systematic version of what people do everywhere to sustain an ordered life” (Strathern, 1985:111). However, the plural legal order in *Gurageland* exemplifies that legal systems could not always simply be distinguished by their simplicity or complexity but should be understood as sharing common domains and be regarded as complementary to each other. In other words, the settings in which processes of dispute settlement and maintenance of order take place range from formal courts and other judiciary systems to informal and less-procedural gatherings of community members at family, kin, neighbourhood, clan, etc level. Thus, in line with suggestions by the Benda-Beckmanns (2006), it becomes the task of the researcher not just to study the different bodies of laws in a plural legal order but also to understand the interactions between the different bodies of law, the social processes surrounding constellations of legal pluralism and how these are played out in social life to achieve justice and social order.

The making and unmaking of legal systems in *Gurageland*

Gurageland is inhabited by groups consisted of an amalgam of people originally from south-western Ethiopia and those from the northern forces of conquest that started to spread out to the south during the reign of Amda Tsion (1312-42). While the northern army of conquest brought with it laws that were based on the Christian religion, the series of military, commercial and social interactions with neighbouring peoples gave way to Islamic customs and laws, with intensified Islamic teachings and legal practices having taken place during the Christian-Moslem civil wars in the late 15th C. This resulted in the imposition of legal layers based on religion on top of the pre-existing traditional legal systems. In the 19th C. alliances were created that united *Gurage* clans, historically engaged in endemic internal strife and feuds, frequent conflicts with neighbouring groups and repeated wars with the expansionist central state forces. The alliance between the western clans gave birth to the *Sebat-bet Gurage Qitcha* – subsequently named *Yejoka* - as a collection of laws enacted for the administration of inter-clan relations and settlement of disputes at sub-clan and clan levels. Parallel

processes resulted in the promulgation of the *Gordana Sera* in Northern *Gurageland* (cf. Shack, 1966; Bahru, 2002.)

After centuries of parallel processes of independent existence and some level of amalgamation of traditional and religious laws, the final conquest of all *Gurage* clans and incorporation of *Gurageland* into the central Ethiopian state under then King of Shoa later Emperor Menelik of Ethiopia in 1889 brought with it another legal layer when the administrative and legal systems from the centre were introduced. Under the new system local administrators were appointed from among the ranks of the army of conquest, elite provincial governors directly from the power centre and clan chiefs to work in subordinate positions to implement the central system of indirect rule. At the surface of political administration, this 'power from the centre' replaced the traditional governance system which was based on hierarchically organised genealogical ties between local descent groups and independent political units with positions and authority attached to fields of clanship. This resulted in the loss of autonomy of traditional leaders which ranged from semi-domination to complete subjugation by the power holders blessed from the centre.

Detailed description of the institutional changes following the conquest had been provided, among others, by Shack (1966), Gebreyesus (1991), Worku (1991), Alemayehu (1993) and Dinberu *et al* (1995). The various writers unequivocally noted that efforts of the central state to centralise the traditional segmentary authority system did not result in totally transforming it. In an attempt to adopt a compromise political system, Emperors Menelik II and Haileselassie I appointed clan and village headmen to assume local administrative authorities under provincial governors. They also introduced changes in the territorial division of *Gurageland* through the splitting up of territories into districts and sub-districts to correspond to institutions of military and political superstructures imposed on top of the traditional governance system.

Until 1930, the legal system of the centralist government was based on the *Fetha-Nagast* – literally meaning judgement/justice of the King, which '... was basically a codex of law providing for secular and religious legal provisions (Fasil, 1997:17), drawing elements from both Christian and Islamic traditions. The introduction of the first *written* Constitution in 1931 represented a key development in the formal government system in Ethiopia, which provided a systematic framework for the reunification of the country, centralisation of power, fiscal administration, institutionalisation of a ministerial system and separation of judiciary courts to deal with civil and criminal cases and administrative tribunals to deal with civil cases affecting government (cf. Fasil: Ibid.) However, unwritten sets of laws continued to exist in the form of traditional and religious laws controlled by means of 'pacts'. It was these laws that have actually been applied for the administration of societal affairs and had real meaning to ordinary people.

This as it is, the coming of the Italians in 1935 and their control of the public sector until 1941 resulted in the collapse of the formal state system. Similar to groups elsewhere in the country, in the interpretation of some writers, this period saw "the 'liberation' of the *Gurage* from [the central] Ethiopian [state] domination [and]... a short-lived cycle of reorganisation of their society along traditional lines." (Shack, 1966:27) Among other developments, the traditional systems were re-engaged in a modified form through local courts to deal with cases that arose in relation to the reclamation and redistribution of land. This period also saw the strengthening and more frequent use of Islamic courts and many aspects of the traditional customs. After defeat

of the Italians and restoration of the Imperial System in 1941, old forms of provincial administration were re-introduced, including the regrouping of the previously independent provinces of *Gurage*, along other districts, within the new province of Shoa, with the South-easternmost and South-western regions of *Gurage* made districts of adjacent provinces.

In 1942, the Ministry of Justice was set up with a chain of legal institutions including communal/local courts, regional courts, provincial courts, the High court, and Supreme Imperial Court. In 1943, rules of procedures for vertical transfer of cases between courts and systems of circuit were introduced, while the Islamic courts were reorganised into *Kadis*, *Naibas* and *Shariat* Appeal Court (cf. Perham: Ibid). As part of the new system, administrative and judiciary functions and bodies were separated, at least in urban areas, and tribal chiefs and elders councils were given a modest role as a ‘means of effective social control’, with still overlapping and often conflicting responsibilities for the village headman (Perham: Ibid; Shack: 28, 170).

It was noted that on the occasion of introducing comprehensive legal codes and the revised constitution in 1955, the Emperor, then ‘provider’ of the Constitution and all other systems, was quoted for expressing that “no modern legislation which does not have its roots in the customs of those whom it governs can have a strong foundation” (Fisher, 1971: 709). However, neither this Constitution nor the detailed provisions within the legal codes, did adequately incorporate elements of the existing traditional and religious legal systems but only remained to be legal layers imposed on top of these systems. As a general policy, the writers or government officials did not necessarily view the traditional legal systems from entirely negative standpoint (cf. Fisher: Ibid.) However they did not attempt to fully recognise these systems and base the country’s legal framework on them. As the same writer has also explained, on the one hand, the problem seemed to lie in ignorance of the codifiers of the laws about the nature and functioning of the traditional systems but also in the lack of knowledge as to what elements and useful practices of the traditional systems could be incorporated into or be permitted to operate effectively under the umbrella of the new system. On the other hand, the strong drive for *modernity* made the few elites of the time to simply adapt western traditions and introduce a uniform system, which then did not address the needs and fit the realities of people as diverse as those living in Ethiopia.

The superimposition of legal systems on top of existing ones continued under the Dergue period (1974-1991), with the legal frameworks made to reflect socio-cultural changes and reorganisation of institutions along the Marxist-Leninist driven socialist principles, during which a new Constitution was promulgated in 1987. Like the constitutions and legal provisions that preceded it, the new system under the Dergue did not result in supplanting the layers established by the existing systems. Admittedly, however, while superimposition does not necessarily produce adherence, gradual process of integration between the systems have taken place, albeit at different degrees at different times. As it is rightly noted by Bussani (1996), “what is usually referred to as the [traditional] layer is made up of heterogeneous customs which interacted with each other historically as [the people of different groups] experienced migration, conquest, [intermarriage, trade, etc], which modified the customs of [all the groups involved]” (p. 47). As it can be seen from the *Gurage* case, with the introduction of a new system, the old system is not done away with. However, the efficiency of both the old and new systems may be affected as the interaction and adaptation process would

limit the functioning of both systems. In the end, the process maintains aspects of both systems and the resultant situation exhibits a plural legal order at the local level.

It is this local plural legal order that has been inherited and with the change of government and order of the state in 1991, promises were made that blueprint approaches will be avoided and newer approaches emphasising organisation of public services based on people's own existing practices would be adopted. The latest Constitution of 1994 based on Federalism provides, among many rights, for the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to be able to establish independently or jointly their own self-governments at the Woreda level or above. Within this framework, people have been disposed with economic, fiscal and administrative powers to be exercised at national, regional and local levels. Under administrative power, people have the right to establish institutions and laws relating to various regional and local government organs including security and judiciary. In general, one could say that in principle this provides people with space to shape socio-economic and political organisations. This is particularly true in relation to the legal system, where existing institutional practices can basically be considered as alternatives. In this case, (Articles 78-5 and 34-5 of) the Constitution provide that religious or customary (traditional) courts may be established or given official recognition by the Council of Peoples' Representatives, with their jurisdiction limited to adjudication of personal or family matters (cf. Fasil 2002: 101.)

After engagement along the Constitutional provisions for more than a decade now, despite extensive reforms in the civil services including institutional overhauling in the justice sector, formal courts at all levels from local to federal are reported to be choked with multiple problems. A recent Ministry of Justice report indicated that the number of legal cases has significantly increased in recent years, among other factors, in tandem with the swollen population size and expanded economic activities in urban areas. Institutions within the justice sector have been plagued by problems related to outdated systems and practices, low manpower and organisational capacity and inefficient management skill and systems.

While the formal legal system has been undergoing processes of transformation in the face of multiple challenges and problems, the traditional system has also been struggling to overcome problems that range between lack of full recognition by the *modern* system to practical issues of achieving decisions on legal cases and enforcing them. The transformation being pursued within the formal legal system includes computerisation of information management, automated information provision to litigants on status of their legal cases, upgrading of manpower skills and strengthening of coordination between the different formal legal bodies such as police and courts. A somewhat equivalent engagement in transformation of traditional systems has also been witnessed, where the example of the *Yejoka* system exhibits attempts to standardise legal practices among different communities, codify the laws and incorporate new concepts of law such as human rights, gender, etc. Of course, whether these transformations have been initiated as part of the *modernisation* drive among the mainly urban-based, educated elites to the exclusion of the marginalised, largely rural population on which the changes seem to be imposed remains an issue to ponder at.

Implications of plural legal orders for justice and social order in Gurageland

The overall national context for institutional landscapes in present day post-socialist, post-conflict Ethiopia is provided by decentralisation and democratisation reforms

implemented since more than a decade now. The decentralisation and civil service reforms being undertaken within government agencies have shown signs of localising power with local government structures. However, beyond promises, the extent to which these processes have resulted in recognition of multiple local institutions including traditional legal systems is a subject for further investigation. Have the processes resulted in strengthening of local governments and the different organs of the legal system, so that the local institutional landscape is more formalised than before? Have they empowered parallel local institutions so that local governments and formal courts now receive few public powers and face competition for legitimacy? Have the new processes helped to transform the local institutional landscape in such a way that the interaction between the different systems is taking a more positive form and helping to provide efficient governance and legal services to citizens? Several questions need to be raised and researched.

The aim of this ongoing research is, by raising these and other investigative questions, to explore the interactions between different legal institutions as people undertake complex processes of negotiation of justice and social order. As noted in previous pages, *Gurage* people have been engaged in and/or exposed to the definition and redefinition of laws. Historically, hierarchies of laws have developed as legal cases were differentiated by types and levels to be dealt with by the *traditional* or *modern* system and this has formed the negotiated basis for engagement or disengagement of one or the other legal system as people dealt with legal cases. In practice people used one or the other system depending on their desired or anticipated results as they tried to determine the likelihood of decisions by also considering their differential connections to power centres under the traditional and/or modern system. In general, given the plural legal order in *Gurageland*, decisions on legal cases and social order have to be negotiated between individuals and groups that engage with the different legal systems separately or in combination under different circumstances.

Concluding remarks

Through a brief historical account of the emergence of legal institutions, this paper has attempted to show how a plural legal order has been created and maintained under different socio-political and economic contexts in Ethiopia, in general, and in *Gurageland*, in particular. The *Gurage* have come a long way to experience the making and unmaking of different legal systems throughout their history within Ethiopia. As much as generations of *Gurage* have witnessed institutional changes and improvements in social order in their localities and within national frameworks, they also have seen and borne the costs of institutional breakdowns in both human life and property terms. The observer keeps wondering what it takes to ensure a peaceful coexistence and, when necessary, amalgamation of institutions with view to providing more efficient legal services.

Studies of legal systems have so far been concerned with different bodies of law and how different constellations of legal systems emerged. The purpose of this research is to push the investigation a step further and focus its attention on what happens to justice and social order as people deal with legal issues in an environment of plural legal order. This rather short paper points to the need to analyse realities among *Guarge* people who are challenged by situations of legal limbo that complicate the achievement of justice as their cases wander between different legal systems, in as much as they have ripped the fruits of legal pluralism in terms of a generally flexible legal arrangement through

institutional choices available to them. Ongoing further investigation is hoped to shade more light on forms of interaction between different legal systems, processes of negotiating social order and the extent to which justice is served (and sometimes thwarted) as people dealt with and tried to benefit from multiple legal institutions operating in their localities.

References

- Aadland, Øyvind. 2002. 'Sera: Traditionalism or Living Democratic Values? Case Study among the Sidama in Southern Ethiopia.' In *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. Edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang. Stockholm and Addis Ababa, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Forum for Social Studies.
- Aalen, Lovise & Pausewang, Siegfried. 2002. 'Blighting the Seeds of Democracy.' In *Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance*. Edited by Siegfried Pausewang, Kjetil Tronvoll and Lovise Aalen. London, Zed Books Ltd.
- Alemayehu Neri Wurgaso. 1993. *Eset: The Foundation of Culture and History*. Addis Ababa: Bole Printing Enterprise, Amharic Edition, Book 1.
- Allen Sedler, Robert. 1964. 'The Chilot Jurisdiction of the Emperor of Ethiopia: A Legal Analysis in Historical and Comparative Perspective.' In *Journal of Africa Law*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 59-76.
- Assefa Fiseha. 2006. 'Theory versus Practice in the Implementation of Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism.' In *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Edited by David Turton, Eastern African Studies. Oxford, James Currey Ltd.
- Bahru Zewde. 2003. 'Systems of Local Governance Among the Gurage.' In *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. Edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang. Stockholm and Addis Ababa, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Forum for Social Studies.
- Benda-Beckmann, Franz & Keebet von. 2006. 'The Dynamics of Change and Continuity in Plural Legal Orders.' In *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, Nos. 53-54, pp. 1-43.
- Bereket Habteselassie. 1966. 'Constitutional Development in Ethiopia.' In *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 74-91.
- Bussani, Mauro. 1996. 'Tort Law and Development: Insights into the Case of Ethiopia and Eritrea.' In *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 40, No. 1, pp. 43-52.
- Dinberu Alemu, Mengistu Hailemariam, Fikre Hailemariam, Tesfaye Mekuria, Tezerach Bireda, Girma Tilahun, Mitiku Teshome. 1995. *Gogot: The History, Culture and Language of the Gurage*. Welkite, Gurage Zone Culture and Sport Department.
- Earle, Lucy. 2004. *Community Development in Central Asia*. The International NGO Training and Research Centre.
- Eckert, Julia. 2006. 'From Subjects to Citizens: Legalism from below and the Homogenisation of the Legal Sphere.' In *Journal of Legal Pluralism*, Nos. 53-54, pp. 45-75.
- Ensminger, Jean. 1990. 'Co-Opting the Elders: The Political Economy of Incorporation in Africa.' In *American Anthropologist*, Washington University, St. Louis. New Series, Vol. 92, No. 3, pp. 662-675.

- Fasil Nahom. 1997. *Constitution for a Nation of Nations: the Ethiopian Prospect*. Asmara, the Red Sea Press, Inc.
- Fisher, Stanley Z. 1971. 'Traditional Criminal Procedure in Ethiopia.' In *The American Journal of Comparative Law*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 709-746.
- Getinet Assefa. Forthcoming in 2008. Mazoya. *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 3 D-Ha. Edited by Siegbert Uhlig. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag.
- 2005. Geyz. *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, Vol. 2 D-Ha, pp. 781-782. Edited by Siegbert Uhlig. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag.
- 1999. *Indigenous Institutions and Local Development Initiatives: Cases from the Gurage Area of Ethiopia*. School of Graduate Studies, Regional and Local Development Studies, Addis Ababa University. Unpublished MA Thesis.
- Girma Gizaw. 2005. *The World History of Law and Legal Institutions: Ancient, Modern and Contemporary*. Addis Ababa, 1st Edition.
- Leslau, Wolf. 1952. 'The Influence of Sidamo on the Ethiopic Languages of Gurage.' In *Language*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 63-81.
- López, José and Scott, John. 2002. *Social Structure*. New Delhi, VIVA Books Private Limited. First South Asian edition.
- Mihret Ayenew. 2002. 'Decentralisation in Ethiopia: Two Case Studies on Devolution of Power and Responsibilities to Local Authorities.' In *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. Edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang. Stockholm and Addis Ababa, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Forum for Social Studies.
- Moore, S. F. 2001. 'Certainties undone: fifty turbulent years of legal anthropology, 1949-1999.' *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute* 7: 95-116.
- Perrow, Charles. 1991. 'A society of organisations.' In *Theory and society* 20/6: 725-62.
- Shack, William A. 1966. *The Gurage: A People of the Ensete Culture*. International African Institute. London, Oxford University Press.
- Siegfried Pausewang, Kjetil Tronvoll and Lovise Aalen. 2002b. 'A Process of Democratisation or Control: The Historical and Political Context.' In *Ethiopia since the Derg: A Decade of Democratic Pretension and Performance*. Edited by Siegfried Pausewang, Kjetil Tronvoll and Lovise Aalen. London, Zed Books Ltd.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1985. 'Discovering social order.' In *Journal of law and society* 12/2: 111-34.
- Vaughan, Sara & Tronvoll, Kjetil. 2003. *The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life*. Sida Studies No. 10. Stockholm, Edita Sverige.
- Vaughan, Sara. 2002. 'Responses to Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia's Southern Region.' In *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective*. Edited by David Turton, Eastern African Studies. Oxford, James Currey Ltd.
- Winston, K. (2001) *The principles of order: selected essays of Lon L. Fuller*. Revised edition. Oxford: HART Publishing.
- Worku Nida. 1991. *Jebdu: The Gurage Culture and History*. Addis Ababa, Bole Printing Enterprise.
- Yacob Arsano. 2002. 'Seera: A Traditional Institution of Kambata.' In *Ethiopia: The Challenge of Democracy from Below*. Edited by Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang. Stockholm and Addis Ababa, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet and Forum for Social Studies.

Perceptions of Fairness and Justice among the Anywaa Living in the Ethiopian Region of Gambella: their relevance to conflict transformation

Monika M Sommer¹

The lowland Ethiopian region of Gambella, bordering Sudan, forms a classic frontier zone. The contribution reflects the experience and traditions of one of the ethnic groups residing in Gambella, the Anywaa. The paper analyses the perceptions of justice and fairness of this group, using the folklore as an entry-point. It argues that each group has specific perceptions about justice and peace which need to be taken into account when addressing the complex and protracted conflicts of today.

Introduction and Background

This contribution is based on a case study undertaken in the Ethiopian Regional State of Gambella, which shares a long and porous border with the Southern Sudanese regions of Upper Nile and Jonglei. The total area comprises about 23,862.69 square kilometres (Central Statistical Agency, *CSA 2005 National Statistics*, Tables B.3 and B.4). Official population projections based on the census came to an estimated population of 210,134 for 2000 (Statistical Report, December 1995).² The region hosts numerous ethnic groups, of which five enjoy constitutional recognition as being indigenous to Gambella. The land is fertile and rich in water resources; moreover, only recently the economic value of oil findings is being explored³. The quest by different local players for access to wealth, resources and political participation has led to extremely violent forms of dealing with conflict in the past (most infamously the December 2003 event documented in HRW: 2005).

This is not the space to undertake conflict analysis, a complex enterprise which has been done in other places (Sommer 2007; Dereje Feyissa, upcoming). It is rather the attempt to understand the complexity of the conflict as generated due to the above-mentioned reasons from within and to dredge up the local potentials for transforming the protracted conflicts. It is noteworthy to mention that each ethnic group has been preserving traditions and folktales that deal with questions of fairness and justice. My basic assumption here is that these tales, which have been told to the children since generations, have shaped the perceptions of each single person profoundly.

¹ Monika M Sommer, Research Associate at the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Addis Ababa University. E-mail: monika@msommer.de

² The size of the population is highly contested, as its size is the base for numerous privileges, first and foremost seats in the regional government, positions in local administration, access to schools, affirmative action in higher education etc. (for details see Sommer, 2007, federalism)

³ Ethiopia signed an exploration agreement with Malaysia's state-owned oil company Petronas in 2003 giving the company exclusive rights to explore and develop a 15,000-square kilometres (5,792-square mile) area (source AP July 26, 2005)

Objectives

The long-term objective of my study is to contribute to concepts of peace-building that can be approached together with the people and which truly will be owned by them. It is an attempt to build upon the strengths of the society itself and on the cultural heritage. Local actors will not be taught in peace-building strategies which have been developed in the western world, based on western perceptions. On the contrary, the role of an external facilitator will at best be the one to help local actors to literally dig out their own capacities for peacemaking and to develop self-respect, confidence and a sense of self-determination while using them.

Study questions

The study questions are:

- What do local narratives reveal about perceptions of justice and peace?
- How, according to these stories, shall peace be re-established after violations of life, property or rights?
- How do these perceptions relate to ‘modern’ concepts of justice and peace-building?

Questions of theory and methods

Theory

First it needs to be stated that the terms (folk-)tale, lore and narrative are going to be used in an almost interchangeable mode. Finnegan (with reference to Bascom) defines folktales as ‘prose narratives ... as fiction. (...) They are not considered as dogma or history, they may or may not have happened (They) may be set in any time and place.’ All terms are clearly connected, narrative being the broader term, potentially crossing the boundary to written prose (Finnigan 1992: 149).

In the interpretation of lore continuing methodological developments can be observed, schools namely differing in the grade to which context and performance are analysed. For the purpose of this paper, the structuralist approach, in its particular form of narratology seems to be the most appropriate method of interpretation and of coming close to the meaning of the narratives (Finnegan 1992: 39, 183; Czekelius 1993: 121). Thus the topics to be investigated in the analysis include:

1. Patterns in the roles of narrative characters (the lion, the hunter, the elder brother pp).
2. Structure of plots.
3. The varying voices and viewpoints in the narration.
4. The interaction of fiction and event.
5. The social context of storytelling.

The author is well aware of the specific risk that lies in the quest for meaning while analysing narratives: There might be several meanings; meaning may change through time and depending on specific occasions. Stories may be also multilayered. There are different ‘parties’ involved in the construction of meaning: starting with the people who created the earliest versions of the story to the researcher who collected the tale – all these points mediated by numerous storytellers in uncountable social situations. In an attempt to cope with this complexity, the dialogic nature of the storytelling will be taken into account. Meaning represents an emerging process (Finnegan 1992: 184).

The narratives that are being analysed in this paper are understood as social and moral teachings, and as a presentation of the collective knowledge of the self in the

world (identity). Thereby the different characters in the stories will be analysed, as each character represents a specific identity and point of view in the narratives, especially in the fables. The focus of the analysis though is laid on the content and symbolism of the stories, the contextual analysis, and the symbolisms within a given cultural context. The latter is being done based on focus-group discussions and on literature studies.

In this paper the terms justice and peace are used almost interchangeably. One reason is the interconnectedness of justice and peace in the sense that no lasting peace will be achieved without having met the basic needs for justice of any given community (Galtung 2000, and also the experience of the TRC in SA). More importantly though, the narratives do not clearly distinguish into two concepts – one of peace and another of justice. As social tales, which are meant for teaching, they rather deal with individual and collective behaviour in a rather comprehensive way. The research had to take this character of oral tales into account.

Methods

Study Site

The field research was carried out during several visits in Gambella in 2006 and 2009 - in all covering a period of about twelve months. The research was based on a qualitative methodology, comprising open in-depth group and individual interviews and observation. Interviews were conducted in Gambella town and district villages, among others in Abobo in the case of the Anywaa, Lare, in the case of the Nuer and Shebo, where settlers from the Ethiopian highlands live, namely Kambatta and Haddiya.

Study Population

This paper focuses on the narratives and traditional teachings of the Anywaa, one of the major ethnic groups residing in Gambella. They also look back to the longest history of settling in the region.

The research as such though is not limited to one group of the population only. Gambella shows a real multi-ethnic composition of people. Therefore the overall study includes collections of stories and traditional narratives from the major groups of the population, in particular from the Nuer, Anywaa, and some groups who were resettled during the 1980s by the previous government, in an attempt to rigorously solving the distribution of fertile land in Ethiopia (Pankhurst 2002: 134). This group is locally referred to as 'highlanders', but combines diverse ethnic identities, such as Oromos, Kambattas, Amharas and Tigrays. The interview-partners were selected according to judgement and convenience. I invited interview partners to tell stories that were passed from generation to generation. I especially asked for stories that were told to children to teach them right and wrong and to help developing a sense of fairness. Sometimes I was instantly introduced to other people, often elder women, who assumingly knew better than the one approached in the first place. These convenience samples are not representative by definition, but still reflect a broad segment of society and contribute to constructing a differentiated overall picture.

Sample Selection

A series of interviews were conducted among the Anywaa, mostly with women. Women - grandmothers – use to gather the children and tell stories. Very often the explicit aim of these gatherings is entertainment and intellectual challenge through riddles. From the collected stories I chose those which seemed most relevant. After listening to the stories

I asked the storytellers what the story meant to them and what significance and meaning it carried for them.

As a second step, focus group discussions were conducted with other members of the same ethnic group as to whether they knew the specific story and whether it was significant for them. In all an *open interview* type of review was carried out, which included the respondents' discussions and reflections in relation to the stories and questions of justice in general.

In gaining the acceptance of the interviewees, I benefited from my previous role as advisor for a local inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace initiative, the Gambella Peace and Development Council (GPDC). Friends and kin of friends at different stages arranged and facilitated ways of meeting individuals, both women and elders of the areas.

Anywaa stories on fairness and justice

In the case of the Anywaa, most stories were told by women on different occasions. They explained that they distinguish different types of stories – basically short and long ones. The fun of listening to the stories and to tell them was easily recognisable in all my interviews. In all cases there was a lot of laughing and giggling. My interview-partners obviously loved the stories as much as the process of telling them. Many said that they most loved the riddles and short stories.⁴ This beloved genre was not attributed with a deeper meaning, but is mentioned here, as it was always emphasized that especially riddles formed an important part of the rite of story telling. Whenever I mentioned in group-discussions this genre, I could be sure to collect some more riddles, followed by shorter and longer stories.

Some stories reflecting a sense of fairness

This subsection will present some of the most remarkable stories, mainly of the longer genre. The following story – dubbed as 'The Mango Tree' - was told by a widow aged 30 years (Abobo, January 2007), who said that this was her favourite story. When she introduced herself, she also emphasized that she had to be parent, mother and father for her children. In all these capacities she found that stories were helpful instruments of teaching. She was especially fond of her eldest son, who became a teacher. This is her story:

One day, a man was very, very hungry. When he walked around, desperately looking for food, he saw a mango tree in the middle of the river. The tree was weighed down by the most beautiful mangos you can imagine. But the tree was guarded; the guard sitting right on the tree. The man on the bank of the river frantically thought about ways to get to the mangos. "How about throwing stones, the guard will not be able to defend himself – there are no stones in the middle of the river. Eventually he may take a mango and throw it on me!" Thinking about it was doing it: he collected stones and started throwing them on the guard. The guard in return angrily took one of the bigger mangos and threw it back. Our hero caught it happily, but ran away quickly!

⁴ An example of a riddle would be (Abobo, 01-02-2007), "Traditionally, grandmother and grandfather called upon everyone on regular occasions. And then she would say for instance, 'Something can not be wrapped with grass'. The grandmother then would ask the children 'who can answer this?' And the children would sit and think and think If they did not get it, the grandmother would say 'Pi' (Water)".

In the following discussion in the group many listeners confirmed that they had known the story before. An 18 years old man commented “I heard the story from an old man, when I was a kid. What it teaches me? The man on the tree is the owner of the tree. It does not say much to me. Maybe we should consult the old man who told me the story!” The majority though enthusiastically identified with the character who managed to get something to eat. They suggested that the story was about the importance of being smart and planning. “The hungry guy thought about a strategy to get to the mango and was successful (May 2007)”.

Obviously the story – at least in the way it was told to me – does not put direct emphasis on the question of ownership in a legal sense. Legally speaking the tree is guarded – the guard normally not being the owner of the object that he watches over. The storyteller sympathises with the hungry man who outwitted the guard. The story is told from his perspective. The listener is intimate with his thoughts and speculations. His antipode, the guard and adversary, is presented from his point of view. Given this perspective of the story, it is most interesting that the young listener felt somehow uneasy. He instantly identified with the guard, focussing on the question of ownership and whom the tree rightfully belonged to. In a conversational situation, when he did not want to argue with the storyteller, he expressed this feeling by saying that the story did not make much sense for him.

The tension expressed by his reaction is especially interesting when we know that much of the contemporary political discourse among the Anywaa is about the legal ownership of land. Historically there is some evidence that the Anywaa were the first settlers in Gambella. For sure they had established stable villages long before the Nuer acquainted a more agro-pastoralist lifestyle that also includes cultivation of fields, thus becoming more stable. Anywaa claim that they are the rightful owners of the land and of most of the natural resources of the region as such. Others, highlanders – and in this regard also Nuer – are mainly perceived as intruders. In this context the young listener instantly identified with the more “sedative” figure in the story, which is the guard on the tree. He is first and foremost disappointed that he was cheated by a newcomer.

Interestingly the storyteller rather identified with the protagonist of the story, who overcame the guard by just being smarter than him.

The following story was told on the same occasion:

Once upon a time there was a forbidden road, which no one was allowed to pass. The passage was watched over by a guard, who was accompanied by a dog. But our man was committed to pass that point. So he made a plan: ‘I’ll go there, and as soon as the dog barks, I’ll run into the direction I’ll come from. The guard will stop me and ask me, ‘where do you want to go?’, and I’ll indicate the direction I really come from. Hopefully he then will send me to opposite direction.’ So it happened. He went to the control point, the dog barked and the man turned around, as if he came from the other side. The guard ask, “Where do you come from?”, and he said “from there”. Angrily the guard chased the dog on him and shouted, “Run, run back as soon as possible”. So the man happily hastened towards his destination, exactly where he wanted to go!

Here again we find the character of the guard. But this time he does not guard property as such but the passage from one place to another, a road. Again the plot is how the protagonist overcomes this obstacle. Many in the review group did not know the story. They then discussed that it was another story about being clever. About to be more shrewd than those in a legal position, or who are representing authorities. Interestingly, this time the young listener was freely laughing with the others. He did

not have any problem when it came to cheating for the sake of the freedom of movement as such.

When I mentioned that I heard the story in Abobo, a 50 year old woman suggested that this story might have its specific background in the unique position of Abobo in Anywaa-land (in this context she did not refer to ‘Gambella’, but to ‘the land of the Anywaa’. She commented, “It may be a story of Abobo. This story somehow reflects the history of Abobo. Abobo is the place where all Anywaa who go to and come from Gambella town have to pass through. A person coming from Akobo, Jor, (...) everyone will stay in Abobo for one night, before continuing to Gambella. When you come from Gok, you will be able to travel within one day to Abobo, from Pokeri, you’ll reach Abobo. Abobo in this sense is the geographical centre for the Anywaa living in the region of Gambella. So, if I want to stay overnight, I will go to people in Abobo. A roadblock therefore will be of great relevance, and efforts will be made to overcome this obstacle. The situ of Abobo also brings many visitors to the town, and food and other resources are insufficient very often.” She then continued with telling the following story, which she referred to as ‘Hospitality in Abobo’:

A man in Abobo was tired of constantly hosting his mates. He thought about what to do; how to get rid of the many visitors in his house. Normally, the women will bring the food out to the men who get seated around the fire outside – to their husbands and to the other men of the household and to the visitors. But this man decided to go to his house and to eat there alone (a horrendous behaviour that violates all customs related to hospitality). When he entered the house and reached out for the spoon, which was placed on the shelf, the spoon started to shout! It refused to be taken by the man who wanted to eat alone secretly – without sharing with the travelling guests. So the women came in, saying: Ah, here you are! (...) He was publicly exposed like that – an extremely embarrassing situation for a man!”

The listeners agreed with the storyteller about the simple moral of the story. It is not good to eat alone. Social life is important. Food has to be shared as much as other commodities of the community.

One listener who did not know the story about the guarded road was inspired to tell the next story about ‘The Lion and the hyena’:

The story I know about the dog’s family in the widest sense is about a hyena and all other animals⁵. This is the story: One day the lion insisted that his bull had given birth. This outstanding claim was false of course; as a matter of fact, the lion’s bull had fathered the calf, but it was the hyena’s cow that had given birth. But as the lion is a very strong and powerful animal, no one dared to contradict him. The hyena called upon all animals to decide upon this issue. When the animals gathered, they uttered, “Yes, yes” and “how amazing!” to the claim of the lion. No one dared to openly doubt the statement of the lion. All animals? No, they were still waiting for the monkey. Only the monkey was late. When he arrived, they blamed him, “why have you kept us waiting?” “Everyone came, only you were not here!” Then the monkey said, “My apologies! I had to boil water and couldn’t come earlier.” They said, “What for?” The monkey replied, “Oh, my father gave birth”. They wondered, “Ah??? Your father gave birth? How can a man give birth?” Then the monkey said, “How then could the bull of the lion give

⁵ See also “Leero Waac Anyaa”, (2002) for a more elaborated version of the story; I heard the story again hal a year later in Abol (September 2007) The story is extremely popular.

birth?” After that the monkey quickly climbed the tree – and the lion did not pursue his case any longer!

Here we have some of the main characters of the animal kingdom, most prominently the lion and the monkey. The lion represents the strongest animal, whereas the other main character convinces with cleverness and courage. He is the only one to confront the lion. The story is constructed in a circular way – the original peace among the neighbours, the hyena and the lion is interrupted. Even the council of all animals seemingly fails to reinstall justice and lasting peace. Only the interference of the monkey – an outsider – it is stressed that he even dares to break the rules and to come late – reinstalls the initial state of harmony. The story builds up tremendous tension when describing, how the powerful character of the lion succeeds in the propaganda for his – false – cause. But eventually truth prevails and the narrative cycle closes.

The story-teller, a woman in her forties, loved the story because it represents the victory of mind over pure power. Moreover, she saw parallels in contemporary life, “The monkey in our stories is very intelligent – always! This story tells us, that of course, sometimes a powerful person may claim that something is true, which is not true. Like the lion in the tale. He claims that his bull gave birth. And – as in real life – the crowd follows him because they are cowards. In the story, there was literally not one person to tell the truth to the lion. But the monkey did. The monkey was even accused of being too late at first. But then she gave her explanation that was embarrassing for the lion and which revealed the truth! Everyone knows that a man cannot give birth!”

Now, if an Anywaa behaves like the lion, someone will tell him this story! The monkey obviously is an important figure that tells you that life in community is not only about brutal force, but also about cleverness and skills. ⁶

The following story was told by a woman of Abobo:

This is the story of dog, monkey and wolf. Once upon a time these three animals used to work together well. But while the dog and the wolf were productive, the monkey just sit aside, watching and doing nothing. When they finished their work they received salary, the monkey went to collect his pay as well. The other two, dog and wolf muttered among themselves, “This is not fair. He has not done anything, but receives the same reward.” They decided to present the case to an elder. The elder was the lion. (Laughing and giggling). They complained, saying: “We feel that you should assign work to the monkey, too. And we would like to advise you to make sure that he really works!” They called upon the monkey, sat together and told him, “We want you to become a shoemaker”. The monkey replied, “If you really want me to become a shoemaker, I need the skin of the dog and the skin of the wolf to be able to prepare good shoes.” The lion said, “If this is the case, I will kill these two animals for you”, and he killed both! The monkey took the hides and layed them into a well to make them soft. When he did that, he saw his own face reflected in the water. This gave him an idea. He returned to the lion and said, “Come and have a look. There is something going wrong. When I started making the shoes, I placed the leather into the water, but then I saw someone in that well – the face is like yours, and it is eating the hides! So the lion went to see the well, he saw his face – and jumped into the well in order to chase the thief away. Instantly the monkey amassed some soil and covered the well – thus the lion got buried alive and drowned. From then on the monkey continued his idle lifestyle without further interference! Moreover, after the lion was dead, he became the ruler of all!

⁶ This is not the place to go deeper into the subject of competition between patrilineality and matrilineality which seems to be another issue dealt with in the story

The actors here are the familiar one. Most prominently the lion and the monkey are juxtaposed again. Like in the previous stories, the monkey is clever. But here, we do not meet the clever figure striving for justice and truth – as in the story of the bull that allegedly gave birth. He uses his intelligence for less socially valuable aims: to gain power and to protect his idle lifestyle.

In the review group (May 2007) it turned out that this story was known in other ethnic groups, too, notably among the Amharas. There are some hints that suggest that the story was adapted from “highland” sources. A 9-year old girl from the northern group of the Amhara, who attended the meeting enthusiastically seconded: “Yes, yes, I know that story. Daddy told me. The only thing is – the other animals wanted to kill the monkey, because he was smart. That was why he arranged the story, telling them that he could make shoes out of them. And then he even fought the lion.” A middle aged Anywaa woman confirmed: “Yes, I know the story. But this is a story that I heard in school when I was in grade 3. I think it is an Amharic story. Not an Anywaa story.”⁷

The story is nevertheless added here, because it shows that local traditions are not carved in stone, but that they develop. They draw their resources from different backgrounds. The storyteller, who has been living in the village of Abobo for most of her life, was convinced that she was telling an Anywaa story. She loved the story because of the clever monkey who – again – overcame the power of the lion. There was this gap in the story though that left it unexplained, why the monkey would kill wolf and dog – reasons that were later given by the Amhara-child. For this context it remains important that Anywaa in Abobo identify with the characters of the story and use it in their own context: to teach children about the virtues of wit and cleverness that can overcome power and strength.

The following story was told in the review group, confirming that this now was a real Anywaa story. The deaf people:

This story is about two deaf persons. Each person owned a goat. One day one of the goats went astray and got lost. The owner of the goat searched for it in vain, but the deaf neighbour found it. The goat was not unharmed though, but had one broken leg. When he came to the owner of the goat and returned it, he was instantly accused of having injured the goat and broken its leg purposely. So the two people started quarrelling. Eventually they brought the case to court. The judge though, was deaf, too. They were all deaf. Each of them could speak, but was unable to listen. The first man accused the other of having broken the leg of the goat. The judge, who could not hear, only saw the accused man who was accompanied by his wife. The woman carried her child on her back. The judge decided: This child is not your child! It should be given to the rightful mother! The judge said: “You are doing wrong. The law is not on your side.” And he said to the other man, “This child is yours! Take it home.” So they left the court: One with the child of the other, in addition to the goat with the broken leg!

Like the previous stories, this one was considered as an illustrated proverb, like a teaching for the next generation and the community. But this story leaves the animal world; the actors are human beings. The plot of the story is developed in the form of a wave. We follow the actors performing certain activities – rescuing the goat, returning

⁷ In the fables of the Amhara, the monkey has different features as compared to the monkey in traditional Anywaa tales. There, the monkey is not necessarily only clever, but always in danger to become victim of his own shrewdness. A typical and very popular Amhara-story about a monkey would be the story of the “the scribe and the monkey”. In that story human beings use the skill of the monkey to imitate human behaviour to make the monkey commit suicide.

the goat, seeking justice, but eventually unfairness prevails. There is no return to an initial state of balance and harmony. The inabilities of the actors prevent justice to overcome failures.

The storyteller, after telling the story emphasised that all Anywaa stories are significant and never go without meaning beyond the story itself. This one – according to her and the listeners – was of overall importance, as it dealt with the role and value of listening. Listening to each other is much more important than talking. Only listening allows you to understand each other. Only by listening it is possible to understand the story behind the surface. As in this story the owner of the goat assumed that the injured goat had been hurt by the one who carried it. This visible evidence did neither reflect reality, nor reveal the truth. The importance of listening is emphasised for all - for elders and judges as much as for ordinary people, including neighbours.

In other words, the point is that there will be no justice at all, when there are only deaf people talking. In fact, the deaf judge only aggravates the problem, to the extent that the child is taken away from his family.

In the review group a young lady tried to bring up some hope. She said, “It is true that people today – including the authorities – do not listen to the people and their needs. But even those deaf persons can learn to listen. What is needed is a third person, an intermediary who can tell them the truth. This is the chance!”

Story telling in contemporary life

During the review group a woman in her forties came up with a story about story-telling in contemporary life.

“There is a similar, but true story. It happened when we were in the meeting (of the regional parliament). It was during the time of Barnabas⁸. A man stood up in the meeting saying “You, Barnabas, you are always calling us to gather here. You show interest in learning about the problems of Gambella. Then you are the one, who explains the problems to us, (...) and again you ask. We have explained our problems several times, but you never listened. Tomorrow you will come again” He would always say the same He would never solve any problem. “You select leaders for us, which are not our leaders. We did not elect them. The first Okello⁹ was elected, but the second one¹⁰ not. You are not from us. And you do not understand what we say. Why are you disturbing us?” He told all this to Barnabas – and the history about the hyena. And Barnabas came down from his dais, saying: what do you mean when calling me a hyena? It turned out to be the last meeting with Barnabas. He never came back again. They “punished” him. He returned to Mekele, to his region, where he became head of the regional Health Bureau.

The man compared him with a hyena!”

Unfortunately I haven’t had the opportunity yet to listen to the full story of the hyena which was used in this debate in parliament. Obviously the story had a stark effect on the audience. In a situation characterised by oppression, mutual suspicion and fear it allowed the speaker to give his opinion about an allegedly politically appointed cadre

⁸ Dr. Gebrehab Barnabas was the Deputy Minister of Federal Affairs and the highest-ranking federal official in Gambella until early 2004.

⁹ Okello Nigilo, President of Gambella (1991-2003). He was arrested in late 2002 and released in February 2006, without being sentenced. The first president of Gambella after the collapse of the Dergue, was Okello Ouman (1992-1997). He was killed by rebels (allegedly Anywaa-rebels)

¹⁰ Okello Akway, President of Gambella (2003-2004), fled to Europe in January 2004, where he applied for asylum

and even publicly compare him with a hyena – the most disrespected animal in the fable-world – that feeds upon the dead. The name hyena is commonly applied to a cruel, treacherous, and rapacious person; one that resembles the hyena in some of its repulsive habits. The reference to a well known character in folktales and fables allows conveying information that would not be able to express openly in any different way: Dr B., the official representative of the Ethiopian federal government is unwanted in Gambella. Moreover, the story in the story suggests that the occurrence of storytelling in the local parliament directly caused the transfer of Dr B. to Mekele.

Some common features

Some of the main characters we met over and over again were the lion and his adversary, the monkey. Among the other animals the hyena and the dog are somehow outstanding. In this context the former two animals are most important. The lion represents the king of the animal world. He is not only powerful, but shows vain personality traits. The stories collected here tell the listeners that an unjust and unfair regime, which is purely based on power, can be overcome by skill and wit. This seemingly is an important message among a people that had suffered under a number of rulers in Ethiopia who were always considered as unfair intruders into the country of the Anywaa.

It is to be noted here that in the Ethiopian context, the depiction of the lion as a self-conceit personality who needs lot of admiration is of particular significance. The Ethiopian imperial state used the lion of Juda as a major symbol of power, representing the Salomonic line. Emperor Haile Selassie even presented himself accompanied by living lions during official gatherings. Up to today the lion occupies a major role in main-stream Ethiopian life not only as a living animal in the lion zoo in Addis Ababa, but also as symbol in a number of labels and pictograms, or as statues in front of many government buildings. The message that the power of the lion-ruler can be outsmarted by superior wisdom and knowledge – as represented by the monkey – is a powerful message for the people and holds for hope in the future. It has to be emphasized though that this interpretation was not articulated by any Anywaa person. It does not stem from a knowledgeable listener, but is the interpretation of an outsider. Other indigenous groups, i.e. the Nuer, know the lion too, as a smug and self-centred character. The lion may rather be seen as an older archetype, which develops particular momentum in the context of contemporary life.

The issues at stake in the tales are truth, lineal descent and ownership. The stories tell a lot about the lack of justice – a justice without ability to listen, the neighbour, who does not listen; calamities that appears when only brutal force is applied.

As a living art, story telling builds up on the context and relies on the knowledgeable audience which can appreciate hints and locate them in a given cultural environment. An excellent example is the story of the hyena, which was quoted in a session of the local parliament. Though the tale of the hyena was only hinted at, the event itself constitutes a new narrative. A local member of the council was able to confront and disrespect the most powerful representative of the federal government. His simple tool was to refer to a – obviously well known – tale of a hyena.

This incident most prominently shows also the lack of standardisation of tales. The tales are art in process. This vital character contributes to the cultural significance of the tale in social life. Some of the stories have similar versions. For instance the story of the deaf people was told differently in a different location and time to another researcher

(see Bayleyegn 1999, unpublished). Moreover, the multi-ethnic environment of Gambella contributes to adoptions of new stories, which seemingly fit into the own belief system – thereby modifying it. Narratives and tales thus maintain their important social function while further developing in an open process.

Preliminary findings

It may be legitimately questioned whether any serious conclusion can be drawn from the analysis of the tales collected during my fieldwork.

First of all it might be questioned whether the art of story telling is still alive, or rather overshadowed by “modern” means of communication and entertainment. Modern life takes its tribute, of course, but, as already discussed above, the art is still alive, and in development. As most Anywaa villages and settlement outside the town of Gambella were without electricity until very recently, modern forms of distraction and entertainment are nor readily available, and people entertain themselves, telling the old stories and further developing them. Even in town stories still play a role.

The adoption of the Amhara story shows the vital state of storytelling, too. The “imported” story of the monkey overcoming the lion by cheating met a trait in the psychology of the Anywaas which allowed them to absorb it into Anywaa heritage. It also shows a tendency to focus on overcoming authority which is believed to be cruel and unjust – even to the extent of killing everyone who is involved in it. In the story the hyena, the dog and the lion die. The monkey is the only survivor. Moreover, by combining their beliefs with new elements gleaned from the contact with other groups, they are able to preserve their own culture in a creative process. Even though some people still know that the story is not originally Anywaa, younger story tellers already include it into their repertoire – incorporating and merging the story with their own heritage and wisdom. New variations and adaptations of stories are constantly being developed.

Secondly, doubt might be legitimate, as to which conclusions could be seriously drawn from a collection of tales and fables. Is the collection of the stories not just as arbitrary as the later interpretation? I tried to reduce this risk by inventing the review groups as a second step (after the collection of the stories). The review groups consisted of listeners of the same ethnic group. These groups in many cases came up with very clear interpretations of how they understood the stories and what they meant to them.

Thirdly, it needs to be further clarified, in which way the underlying perceptions of the stories will be instrumental in developing policies towards justice, healing and peacebuilding. One level of application could be the invention of story-telling in grass-root community dialogues. Telling stories – thereby communicating depth and values of the own culture – broadens the horizon and has shown a healing effect in different circumstances (Zupan 2004: 338). At a second level though the stories reveal to the attendant observer priorities in approaching justice and peace of a group of people. Ideally, this knowledge can be transformed into programs that facilitate understanding between different groups.

In summary, I still feel that it is worthwhile trying to analyse the material, which can give us some understanding about the feeling of the people of Anywaa towards truth, justice and peace.

What do local narratives reveal about perceptions of justice and peace?

When we look into the process of how justice is supposed to be realized, in most Anywaa tales, grievances were brought to the attention of the council of elders (respectively the council of all animals). Only in the tale that supposedly has been adopted from Amhara sources (about the lion and the shoemaker) this procedure seems to be changed. Here the lion alone is the personified ruler and judge in one person. Even the material perception of justice has been slightly shifted in this tale: The monkey does not act any more in the interest of the common good, but pursues his own – idle – interest. The listener has even problems to fully identify with the monkey. He is too selfish and is not able any more to restore an initial state of balance and harmony that could restore a sense of confidence and hope among the audience. Here the wittiest dominates – not only over pure power, but also over the hard-working, slightly stupid contemporaries, who still trust in official authorities. These authorities though proof to be of no support. Justice dramatically fails.

How, according to these stories, shall peace be re-established after violations of life, property and rights?

Some stories re-establish the fair social order. The calf is returned to the rightful owner (the owner of the cow). Others though (the mango-tree and the guarded road) deal with the satisfaction of the poor and powerless in overcoming barriers. In the review group someone said to the first case “We would tell this story (about the lion’s bull) to an Amhara, if he becomes too arrogant!”

The perception of fairness revealed in the stories is certainly not a stable one and is not carved in stone. It is subject to changes and changes with new collective experiences in contemporary life.

Story telling is still part of social life as shown before. It will be used not only in teaching the youth, but also in arguing in public discussions. In the perception of people the stories reveal undisputable truth. At the same time they make it easier to criticise the authority without – or lesser – risk for punishment.

How do these perceptions relate to ‘modern’ concepts of justice and peace-building?

The stories collected so far are not always optimistic in achieving justice. But when the truth is revealed – or justice done – it is very often because of the shrewdness and cleverness of the main actors.

In most stories, there is not anything like “absolute” justice. The owner can be cheated if need arises, the person who violates boundaries in a skilled and intelligent way, finds our sympathy.

Many stories reveal a belief that a consensual decision making process (the council of all animals) may come to acceptable solutions in cases of grievances. Complaints are brought to the attention of the group of animals. The concert of the different characters there seems to guarantee a just solution. The justice cannot be attained by bringing grievances in front of one person only: the lion (in the story about the skins) might be too self-centred or the judge (in the story about the deaf persons) might not be able to listen. In contrast to these stories, a procedure in front of a council is seemingly more trusted.

Compared to modern concepts of peace building, which is very much based on the definition of well defined interests (Saner 2005; Pfaffenholz 2001; Avruch 2002), such a strategy of negotiating interests may appeal to the Anywaa sense for wit and

cleverness. The one, who is able to present his interests and even convinces his adversaries, can be respected. The outcome of such a process may be even acceptable – as long as no better idea and cleverer person comes up and changes the situation. This might be also acceptable – thus making even agreements in the implementation-phase less reliable and subject to further development.

Bibliography/Further Reading

- Avruch, Kevin (2002), *What do I need to know about culture?*, in: John Paul Lederach, Janice Moomew Jenner (ed.), *A Handbook of international Peacebuilding*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
- Bahru Zewde (1991), *A history of modern Ethiopia*, *Eastern African Studies*, London
- Bayleyegn Tasew (2002), *Leero Waac Anyaa*, Addis Ababa University Press
- Bayleyegn (1999), Anywaa oral prose narratives; Ethnic genres and social functions, MA, Addis Ababa, unpublished
- Bush, Robert A Baruch, Folger, Joseph P. (2005), *The Promise of Mediation: The transformative Approach to Conflict*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco
- Clapham, Christopher (2002), *Controlling Space in Ethiopia*, in: Wendy James, Donal L. Donham, Eisei Kurimoto, Alessandro Triuzi (eds.), *Remapping Ethiopia*, Oxford.
- Czekelius, Annette R. (1993), *Of 'Meaning' and 'Significance': The Emic Interpretation of a West African Tale*, in: *African Languages and Cultures*, Vol. 6, No. 2. (1993), 121-132
- Dereje Feyissa (2005), *The experience of Gambella Regional State*, Osaka
- (upcoming), *Making sense of the Conflict Situation in the Gambella Region in National Terms*, paper presented at the International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, July 2007
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1940), *The Political system of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*. New York (reprinted 1977)
- Finnegan, Ruth (1992), *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts*, Routledge, London, New York
- Galtung, Johan (2000), *After Violence: 3R, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, Resolution: Coping With Visible and Invisible Effects of War and Violence*, <http://www.transcend.org/TRRECBAS.HTM>
- Human Rights Watch (2005), *Targeting the Anuak*, report, <http://hrw.org>
- Kurimoto, Eisei (2001), *Capturing Modernity among the Anywaa of Western Ethiopia*, in: Kurimoto (ed.), *Rewriting Africa: Towards Renaissance or Collapse?*, JCAS, Osaka
- (1992) *Natives and Outsiders: the historical experience of the Anywaa of Western Ethiopia*, *Journal for Asian and African Studies*
- Kurimoto, Eisei, Simonse, Simon (ed.), (1998), *Conflict, Age and Power*, Oxford.
- Lederach, John Paul (2005), *The Moral Imagination: the art and soul of building peace*, Oxford University Press
- Pankhurst, Alula (2002), *Surviving Resettlement in Wellega*, in Wendy James ed al (eds), *Remapping Ethiopia*, James Currey, Oxford.
- Perner, Conradin (1993), *"The reward of Life is death": warfare and the Anyuak on the Ethiopian-Sudanese border*, in Tvedt, Terje (ed), *Conflicts in the Horn of Africa*, EPOS, Uppsala

- Pfaffenholz, Thania (2001), *Designing Intervention Processes*, in: Berghof *Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, Berghof, Berlin
- Saner, Raymond (2nd ed., 2005), *The Negotiation Expert*, Martinus Nijhoff Publ, The Hague
- Sommer, Monika M (2007), *Ethiopian Federalism Seen from the Perspective of the Regional State of Gambella: cause of conflict and fierce competition or access to resources and democratic participation?*, working paper, Bremen
- M (2008), *Traditional instruments of conflict resolution and mediation among the people of Gambella, Ethiopia*, in: Wolbert G. C. Smidt, Kinfe Abraham (eds.), *Discussing Conflict*, LIT-Verlag, Münster, Berlin
- Young, John (1999), *Along Ethiopia's Western Frontier: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition*, in: *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No 2 321-346
- Zupan, Natascha (2004), *Facing the Past and Transitional Justice in Countries of Former Yugoslavia* p 327-342 , in: *Berghof Handbook on Transitional Justice*, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Peace Management, Berlin

A National Perspective on the Conflict in Gambella

Dereje Feyissa¹

The western Gambella region is one the most conflict-ridden regions in Ethiopia. The paper identified five types of conflict: Inter-ethnic; intra-ethnic; indigenes and migrants; the state against ethnic groups, and cross-border conflicts. All these conflicts have distinctive local and regional roots but a comprehensive understanding of the conflict situation in the region entails linking them up with the national level dynamics. The paper explored this interface from five angles.

Introduction²

There are different groups of people who live in the Gambella region. According to the 1994 census, the region's population was estimated at 162,397.

Table 1. Population Distribution in the Gambella Region

Group	Urban	Percent	Rural	Percent	Total	Percent
"Indigenous" people						
Anywaa	9831	36%	34750	26%	44581	27%
Nuer	3014	11%	61459	45%	64473	40%
Majangir	64	0%	9286	7%	9350	6%
Opo and Komo	1067	4%	3735	3%	4802	3%
People from various highland areas of Ethiopia						
Amharas	4639	17%	7927	6%	12566	8%
SNNPR	1334	5%	12170	9%	13504	8%
Oromos	5890	22%	4635	3%	10525	6%
Tigrayans	1341	5%	1255	1%	2596	2%
Total	27180	100%	135217	100%	162397	100%

Source: Housing and Population Census, 1994

Although there are elements of reciprocity and complimentary socio-economic exchanges, the dominant pattern of inter-group relations in the region is conflict. Violent conflicts are expressed in various fields of social interaction: from villages to churches, from schools to political parties. The manifestation of violence ranges from the complete destruction of villages to rioting in the schools; from the targeting of minors and the raiding of public transports to the crucifixion of individuals in order to

¹ Research Fellow at Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/S, Germany

² The data used in this paper is extracted from Anthropological fieldworks I conducted in the Gambella region during 2000/2002 and 2004/2006 as a member of the Department of Conflict and Integration, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/S.

humiliate the group to which they belong. In recent times, the conflict has assumed a more violent form involving bombings and massacres.

Levels of conflict

Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in the Gambella Region

There are different levels of conflict in the Gambella region. One of these is inter-ethnic. This is evident in the protracted conflict between the Anywaa and the Nuer, and between the Anywaa and the Majangir. The Anywaa-Nuer conflict is the most prominent of all conflicts in the region. It dates back to the second half of the 19th century when a section of the Nuer (Jikany) migrated to the east from southern Sudan. The main driving force of Nuer territorial expansion are access to and control over vital natural resources, cultivation and pasture lands along the tributaries of the Sobat. The Anywaa and the Nuer are variously positioned in the distribution of these key natural resources and they practice different livelihood. The Anywaa are predominantly cultivators while the Nuer make a living on livestock production, although they are increasingly becoming agro-pastoralists. Anywaa areas are better endowed with natural resources since their major settlements lie along the banks of the rivers with lower population densities. This land type covers less than one percent of the landmass of the region. The Nuer have accessed these lands in two ways. Where there is a major Anywaa settlement, Nuer clans ally through inter-marriage or military alliances with the local Anywaa; and where the Anywaa settlement is small, movement to these pastures is regulated by 'effective occupation' among the various Nuer clans. The resource-driven movements of the Nuer have resulted not only in their territorial but also demographic expansion. Radically formulated assimilationist society that it is, the Nuer have absorbed many Anywaa into their society. In some parts of mixed settlement areas processes of ethnic conversion (Anywaa becoming Nuer) is under way³. In the long term, this has meant the expansion of the Nuer cultural space as well. This is very much resented by the Anywaa who have constructed a different identity system that emphasizes territoriality and purity of blood⁴.

Competition over scarce natural resources is compounded by struggle for political power at the regional level. Power struggle between Anywaa and Nuer elites started in the 1980s during the Derg period. On the basis of their settlement history, settlement pattern, greater competence in national culture and higher degree of education, the Anywaa elites expected a greater political advancement over their Nuer counterparts, which they didn't get. In fact, the Nuer managed to occupy the two key offices of administration and party secretariat. Early in the 1980s disgruntled Anywaa elites established a liberation movement known as the GPLM (Gambella People Liberation Movement) to fight the Derg regime. Allied with major armed groups (EPRDF and OLF), the Anywaa took control over the newly constituted Gambella regional state in 1991. The Nuer then felt marginalised and undertook an intense politics of recognition which resulted in violent conflicts between the two throughout the 1990s. There are at least three major violent conflicts between the two. The first occurred during the early years of the 1990s (1991-2) when militant section of the GPLM committed atrocity

3 This is particularly true in the Jingmir area, located between Akobo and Nasser in present-day Luakpiny County in the Upper Nile State, Southern Sudan.

4 For a comprehensive analysis of the contrasting identity formations between the Anywaa and the Nuer, see Dereje, 2003. *Ethnic Groups and Conflict: The Case of Anywaa and Nuer Relations in the Gambella Region*, PHD Submitted to Martin Luther University, Germany.

against civilian Nuer in what appears ethnic reprisal. As a result, thousands of Ethiopian Nuer citizens trekked to the Sudan along with southern Sudanese refugees. From their bases in the Sudan, groups of armed Nuer mounted counter offensives, which resulted in the destruction of many Anywaa villages along the Baro River. The Nuer contestation of Anywaa political dominance resulted in yet another major war that broke out in Itang district in 1998. A more deadly conflict occurred in 2002 on issues related to succession to the office of the vice president. In post 1991 Gambella the office of the regional presidency is allocated to the Anywaa whereas the offices of the vice presidency and the secretary are allocated to the Nuer and the Majangir, respectively.

Intra-Ethnic Conflict

Intra-ethnic conflict in the Gambella region is evident in the regional cleavages among the Anywaa; party politics among the Majangir and the resource conflict among the Nuer clans. The main faulting line in Anywaa politics is the Lull/Openo divide, those who live along the Baro River and the forest region, respectively. Struggle for political power among the Anywaa is often framed in the language of Lull against Openo. There is also tension among the Majangir on issues related to political power within the MPDO (the Majangir People Political Organisation) and the divergent reactions of the Majangir to land encroachments by their neighbours. Power struggle within the MPDO is framed in terms of ethnic purity. Although political leaders are extracted from the dominant Meelanier clan, the leader of one of the factions is 'half Majangir'. The rivalry between the two factions burst into violent conflict during a sport tournament which the Majangir zone hosted in February 2007. The most intense intra-ethnic conflict is among the Nuer. This is expressed at two levels: political competition among the tribal and clan elites and the conflict over scarce natural resources among the villagers. The Nuer who live in the Gambella region (the Jikany) are divided into three tribes: The Gaajak, the Gaajok and the Gaanguang. The mode of political relation among the three tribes is competitive and at times very hostile. This is true particularly between the Gaajak and the Gaajok. The Gaajak resent the dominant political status of the Gaajok in the wider Nuer society particularly in Southern Sudan. On the basis of their larger demographic size in the Gambella region and a higher degree of incorporation into the Ethiopian state system, the Gaajak aspire a dominant status in Nuer politics in the regional state of Gambella. Intra-ethnic identity politics among the Nuer is also acted out in the emerging separate identity of the Thiang vis a vis the Gaajak.

There is also conflict over natural resources especially among the Gaajak clans. The resource-based conflict among the five Gaajak clans is a case in point. The Thiang occupy the best part of the rangeland. The permanent settlement of the Thiang in these lands deprived other Gaajak clans of their traditional avenues of expansion. Scarcity used to be addressed by the Nuer through a continual eastward expansion, mainly at the expense of Anywaa territories, where most of the dry season grazing lands and cultivation lands are found. An increase in population and a growing pressure on the riverine land, however, has generated competition over resources among the various Nuer clans, for they all compete for the same economic niche. Currently, there are intermittent conflicts between the Thiang and the two Gaajak sections, the Cieng Reng and the Cieng Nyajani on land-related issues.

Indigenes Vs Migrants

The Gambella region was incorporated into the Ethiopian state at the end of the 19th century. Prior to the arrival of the Ethiopian state, the region was inhabited by various groups of people who speak Nilotic and Koman languages. Today, they are survived by the Anywaa, the Nuer, the Majangir, the Opo and the Komo. Gambella is a lowland region that sharply contrasts the neighbouring western highlands. This is the reason why the migrants are called Highlanders. The first category of Highlanders who settled in Gambella is state officials and their families. Few traders followed suit. The bulk majority of the Highlanders who currently live in the Gambella region, however, came in the 1980s as part of the resettlement program. The introduction of coffee farming and timber production in the Majangir area has also encouraged new wave of migrants to the area. The 1990s saw yet another round of skilled migrants to the region. Given the fewer number of educated indigenous people, the newly constituted Gambella regional state encouraged educated Highlanders to come to the region and work as civil servants in the regional government. According the 1994 census, the Highlanders constitute 24% of the region's population and in some areas, particularly in the Majangir Zone and in the regional capital; they constitute more than 50% of the population.

There have been intermittent conflicts between the 'indigenes' and the 'migrants' in the past but the conflict has escalated since 1991. In 1992 more than 200 resettled Highlanders were killed in Ukuna village by armed Anywaa groups (Kurimoto, 1997). In the same year hundreds of Highlanders were massacred by armed groups led by the Nuer prophet Wutnyang. The Highlanders retaliated to both by indiscriminately killing 'black' people. Other than cultural differences, the boundary between the indigenes and the Highlanders is constructed in the language of colour. The 'black' indigenes are contrasted with the 'red' Highlanders. This social boundary is reinforced by a new political boundary. In post 1991 Ethiopia, the various groups of people who live in the Gambella region are accorded with different degrees of political entitlement. According to the regional constitution, sovereignty resides in the five 'indigenous' nationalities, also called by the federal government national minorities. The Highlanders do not fit into this classification scheme. They are of diverse ethnic origins. The category of Highlander is elastic to the extent that any non-Nilotic people with brown skin colour (red in local perception) wherever he/she is from considered as Highlander⁵. In terms of their ethnic identity, the majority of the resident Highlanders are ethnic Amhara, Oromo, Tigreans and Kembatta. In post 1991 political dispensation, the Highlanders emerge as a residual category because, by definition, they 'belong' to ethno-regional states other than Gambella on the basis of their respective ethnic identity. As a result, they do not have a political representation in the regional parliament despite their demographic size.

Despite their exclusion from the political process, the Highlanders dominate the business sector. They also provide more than 50 per cent of the skilled labour of the regional government although affirmative action has already produced a new generation of educated indigenous elite. Although the indigenous languages are promoted in the schools and are used as working language at the zonal and district administration level, Amharic is the working language of the regional government. Their better grasp of the language of the regional government has given the Highlanders an additional competitive edge in the skilled job market, if not in managerial positions and political

5 The Highlanders are also variously called Habesha, Gaala, or Bouny.

offices, which are preserves of the indigenous elites. The sense of insecurity, however, seems to have generated an 'extractive' attitude, which above all is reflected in 'repatriation' of capital to 'homeland' regions. Amongst civil servants, the anxiety that they are likely to be replaced by the 'indigenes' sooner or later has generated a sense of apathy towards carrying out their professional responsibility. The Highlanders sense of relative deprivation is not only about their exclusion from political representation and economic insecurity but also what they consider lack of administrative justice. They see themselves as victims of 'local tyranny'⁶.

The State Against Ethnic Groups

A fourth level of conflict is largely related to the political conflict and military confrontation between the EPRDF and armed groups of Anywaa. The Anywaa and the EPRDF were initially allies. In what appears a memorandum of understanding, the EPRDF promised the GPLM political power over the Gambella region in post-Derg Ethiopia. The Nuer then perceived siding with the Derg; the Anywaa appeared a 'natural ally' for the EPRDF. As an independent political organisation, however, the GPLM resisted EPRDF's hegemonic political behaviour. The EPRDF demilitarised the GPLM in 1992, transformed it into a party in 1995 and the leadership was replaced by 'user-friendly' members. In 1998 the EPRDF further imposed a merger between the GPLM and the Nuer-based party, the GPDUP (Gambella People Democratic Unity Party) and established a more docile regional umbrella organisation, the GPDF (Gambella People Democratic Front). This was resented, especially by the educated Anywaa who established an independent political organisation, the GPDC, Gambella People Democratic Congress. The GPDC seriously challenged the EPRDF-affiliated GPDF during the 2000 regional election. Despite GPDC's electoral gains in Anywaa polling stations, the result was rigged and GPDC got a marginal political representation in the regional council. The pragmatic political promotion of the Nuer by the EPRDF, on the other hand, brought a new round of political tension within the GPDF. The EPRDF dramatically increased the political representation of the Nuer in the regional council in what appears 'thanks-giving' to their contribution during the Ethio-Eritrean border conflict (1998-2000). This political tension escalated into the 2002 deadly conflict between the Anywaa and the Nuer.

The federal government took a series of political measures as part of 'conflict resolution'. Senior officials, including the Anywaa regional president, were imprisoned; members of the regional police who were accused of inciting and participating in the violence (largely Anywaa) were jailed or dismissed from their jobs; the contentious multi-ethnic district of Itang was abolished and parcelled out between the Nuer district of Jikow and the newly constituted Anywaa district of Openo-Alwero. The federal government has also identified the 'root causes' of the conflict situation in Gambella as the existence of 'too many' political parties. On that basis, all the existing parties were abolished in 2003 and were replaced by new ethnic parties modelled on EPRDF's PDOs (People Democratic organizations). These Gambella PDOs were organized by the EPRDF into a new umbrella political organization called the GPDM (Gambella People Democratic Movement)⁷.

6 Some leaders of the MPDO, for instance, are widely known for their power abuse, evident in their sexual exploitation of Highlander women in the job market. Many Highlanders describe their situation as 'humiliation': "the only way our daughters get a job is by sleeping with Majangir officials".

7 In a further political intervention, the EPRDF reorganized the GPDM in 2007 into the Gambella People Democratic Unity Movement (GPDUM).

The political measures taken by the federal government has alienated a large segment of Anywaa society. In fact, what is dubbed as 'Anywaa banditry' (shifta) that gradually evolved into an armed rebellion was largely organized activity of ex- Anywaa police who were dismissed from their jobs. Failing to sustain their own family and claiming to represent Anywaa discontent, they resorted to violence against not only government establishments but also civilian Highlanders. This is so because of the categorical association between the Highlanders and the Ethiopian state. In the discourse of color the Ethiopian state falls on the 'red' side of the color spectrum because state agents who come from the centre readily fall into the category of Highlanders. In September 2003 six road construction workers (Highlanders) were killed. This was followed by a series of indiscriminate killing of Highlanders. On December 13, 2003 Gambella town witnessed an extreme form of violence when the Highlanders resorted to mob violence against the Anywaa residents of Gambella town. The trigger was the killing of eight government officials (Highlanders) on the same day. The individuals who carried out the attack have reportedly never been caught but it was widely assumed both by the Highlanders and the government that the ambush was the work of an armed Anywaa group (Human Right Watch, 2005). Whoever killed them, the manner they were killed was brutal. The severely mutilated bodies were brought to the regional council for a public display before they were taken to the hospital. Assuming that the murder was committed by an Anywaa and agitated by the sensational display of the bodies of the murdered, the Highlanders indiscriminately killed Anywaa male residents of Gambella town with rocks, machetes, and pangas. Some members of the federal army deployed in the region, manned entirely by the Highlanders, participated in the killing with automatic weapons. Estimates of the casualty vary. Anywaa sources and international human right organizations put the death toll to 420 whereas the government acknowledged only 67.

A spiral of revenge killings followed this from both sides. Aggrieved by the complicity of the government establishments in the massacre, feeling vulnerable to more attacks and disappointed by the lack of protection from nor public apology by the government, more than a third of the Anywaa populace crossed the border to Southern Sudan where the various Anywaa armed groups were brought together and formed a politico-military organization known as the GPLF (Gambella People Liberation Front). From its base in Pochalla in Southern Sudan and the adjacent Anywaa territories on the Ethiopian side of the border, the GPLF has fought with the Ethiopian army with various degrees of success. The existing political tension between the Anywaa and the EPRDF is further compounded by the prospect of the discovery of strategic resources in the Gambella region and the issue of economic control related to that. The Gambella basin is one of the major petroleum potential areas in Ethiopia. Currently a Malaysian oil company, Petronas, is undertaking exploration over the entire expanse of the Basin.

Cross-Border Conflicts

A different level of conflict in the Gambella region is cross-border incursions. This is related to large-scale cross-border cattle raiding and the associated loss of human lives from the attacks by the Lou Nuer and the Murle from Southern Sudan. The Lou Nuer cross-border incursions dates back to 1993 and continued until 2006. They displaced Ethiopian Nuer residents of Akobo district and occupied more than seventeen villages. The Murle cross-border cattle-raiding have been around for long time but it has dramatically increased for the last two years as far as areas hitherto were not raided.

These repeated cattle raiding have cost the lives of many people, loss of thousands of cattle and produced massive internally displaced people. Whatever the reasons for the escalation of the Murle cattle raiding might be one thing is certain: None of the villages attacked got support from any of the military establishments in the region. Nor has the Federal government responded to the plea despite the existence of constitutional provisions for a federal intervention.

Community leaders and the various levels of the regional government have appealed to the federal government to put an end to the havoc the Murle are raking on the Anywaa and Nuer pastoralist communities. Despite the deployment of a sizeable federal army in the region with a principal mandate of giving protection to the oil company located near to the villages subjected to the raids, none of the local communities got the protection they badly needed. Rebuffed by the federal army and the regional government, a number of people have fled the region and crossed the border to southern Sudan hoping that they would be safer near the SPLA (Southern Sudanese Liberation Army). Although the effectiveness of the SPLA in 'disciplining' the Murle remains to be seen, its political will to deliver the protection the people seek could have a legitimating effect on the SPLA's latent claim over the Gambella region and its 'black' people. Some of the disaffected local elites are now making sense of the prevailing insecurity through a conspiratorial scheme of interpretation. The inaction of the federal government is made intelligible as a subtle yet cost effective means of displacing the local population from the oil exploration areas.

The National Perspective on the Conflict in the Gambella Region

Undoubtedly, the various levels of conflict and the objects of the struggle have local roots and reflect regional dynamics. These conflicts, however, have also a national dimension. In the following the paper makes sense of the conflict situation in the Gambella region in national terms from five angles.

The Question of the Political Ownership of the Regional States

The Ethiopian constitution refers to 'nations, nationalities and peoples', without spelling out their differences and which group of people are recognized as what. According to the Soviet theory of the 'nationality question', which EPRDF apparently draws on, a nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture (Armstrong, 1977). In the competition to dominate the new political space ethnic groups are variously positioned according to the degree of their 'localness'. This is so not only because of differences in settlement history, settlement pattern, demography and differential degree of incorporation to the national centre but also because of the lack of a standard in the politics of entitlement at the national level. One has to read between the lines to get a feel of the modus operandi of the post 1991 political structure. Which particular ethnic group is qualified for which political status is not explicitly formulated. The haphazard use of these terms to the various groups by the ruling party gives an impression that demographic size is a defining criterion. The five regional states, which are designated as 'mother states' to the five largest ethnic groups, suggests that. But the allocation to the Harari a regional state, one of the smallest ethnic groups, adds complexity to the terminological confusion and reveals what Vaughan (2003) said a 'constitutional oddity'. The remaining three regional states are designated as multi-ethnic in which the various groups of people are competing for a dominant

status. These multi-ethnic regional states are the GPNRS, the SNNPRS (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State) and BGNRS (Benishangul-Gumuz Peoples National Regional State).

Political entitlement in these multi-ethnic regional states is determined by EPRDF's pragmatism than a political practice informed by ideological rigor. This has introduced fluctuating power relations among the competing groups. It is this ambiguous political structure, which raises expectations and ultimately results in the disappointment of groups such as the Anywaa. On the basis of settlement history which accrues the Anywaa a senior position, the indigenous people in their perspective, and contribution to the regime change, mimicking EPRDF's ideology of power, the Anywaa elites aspired and moved towards claiming the GPNRS as an Anywaa regional state at best or a political majority minimum. In the eye of the Anywaa this is a legitimate demand. Should the Amhara, Tigreans, Oromo or the Afar be allocated a regional state in their respective 'homelands' so do the Anywaa deserve the same political right over a region which they regard as their home or at least a dominant political status in a region which is defined multi-ethnic. Situated in this national political context, the radical formulation of the Anywaa ownership claim over the GPNRS makes sense. It is no wonder then that what is considered as 'equitable' power sharing arrangement by the federal government that aims at addressing the issue of proportional political representation is often interpreted by the Anywaa as the usurpation of their legitimate dominant political status.

Institutionalised Identity Politics and Politicisation of Migration

In the political tension between Nilotic indigenes and the migrant Highlander what we are observing is the reflection of the disjunction between constitutional theory and political practice in a local setting. The architects of the Constitution seem to have designed Ethiopia to be a multi-nation, not multi-ethnic federal state. The literature on constitutional law defines multi-nation federation as inclusive in as much as membership to a certain nation or nationality is on the basis of cultural competence and place of residence. Ethnic federalism on the other hand takes biological descent as the criteria of membership (Assefa, 2005). The new political structure laid by the EPRDF is often described in the literature as ethnic federalism (Alem, 2003; Aalen, 2002; Turton, 2005). The relevant clause is Art.39/5 of the constitution: "a nation, nationality or peoples are group of people who have or share a large measure of a common culture or similar customs, mutual intelligibility of language, belief in common or related identities, a common psychological make up, and who inhabit an identifiable, predominantly contiguous territory". This article does not include the requirement of common descent in the definition of a group. As Affef (ibid) noted "in form we can forcefully argue that an Oromo who prefers to stay in Gambella or Benishangul has the right to do so and vice versa. What is required to know is the state official language and not to descend from any of the indigenous languages". According to this line of reasoning, the exclusion of the Highlanders from the political process in the GPNRS becomes doubly 'unconstitutional'. For one thing, the working language of the regional government is Amharic, which the Highlanders are fluent in. Some Highlanders, particularly long time residents, are also competent in the local languages but none of the indigenous political parties have embraced these hybrid social categories, let alone to allow the political representation of the Highlanders either as a group by their own right or on the basis of their ethnic identity. A similar contradiction in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state has caused a political tension and conflict between the

Highlanders and the indigenes (Young, 1999). Unlike in Gambella, however, the Highlanders in BGPNS claimed their 'constitutional' right to participate in the region's political process. Towards that end, they appealed to the House of Federation and the latter ruled that for any Ethiopian to elect or to be elected what the constitution requires is the two/five year residence requirement plus the knowledge of the official language of the region and not the knowledge of the language of the local vernaculars. The House found an earlier decision of the Election Board as well as the practice of the regional government unconstitutional (ibid). Instead of settling the issue of political representation constitutionally or amending the constitution to address such contradictions, EPRDF's political practice is heavily informed by situational pragmatism than a negotiated settlement to this vexing political problem. This ambiguous political structure has created a conflict situation between 'natives' and 'outsiders', particularly in the multi-ethnic regional states such as the GPNRS where old 'national minorities' are pitted against new 'regional minorities'.

The repercussion of institutionalised identity politics does not end at the inter-ethnic and indigenes/migrants level. It has also ushered in social fragmentation within the ethnic groups magnifying and politicising sub-ethnic units of identification. The Lul/Openo divide among the Anywaa; the purity issue among the Majangir and the inter/intra-tribal political competitions among the Nuer are manifestations of the janus-faced nature of the post-1991 identity politics in Ethiopia. On the one hand, identity politics has reinforced inter-ethnic boundary and fostered intra-ethnic solidarity. But the same process has also raised problems of where to draw the line in the definition of the 'self' and engendered intra-ethnic competition for political power and resources.

Contradictions in Ethiopia's Federalism

Ethiopian federalism, like its Nigerian and Indian counterparts, exhibits strong centralising features (Bahargava, 2006; Suberu, R. 2006). This is manifest in its fiscal policy which makes the States virtually dependant on the federal for their financial wherewithal (Keller, 2002) as well as the political structure in which the ruling party controls governance issues in the States through member parties or affiliates (Aalen, 2002). The Ethiopian federal variant needs to account for this paradox more than its Nigerian or Indian counterparts because its constitution generously provides for the States political autonomy and control over their resources. In fact, the Ethiopian constitution has gone extra miles in catering to the States autonomy including and up to secession.

The trouble between the GPLM and the EPRDF; between the GPDF/EPRDF and the GPDC makes sense if it is filtered through this apparent political contradiction. Underlying the problem is the hegemonic aspiration of the EPRDF and the challenges it has faced in areas particularly where there are independent or semi-autonomous political organisations. Various scholars have noted that EPRDF is no loner in its projects of control. It is in good company with the political regimes that preceded it (Clapham, 2006; Merara, 2006). All political regimes in Ethiopia, from imperial, Derg to EPRDF, are 'control frick'. Perhaps where they differ is in the degree of success in their projects of total control over society. This political culture, a feudal legacy, is refined by the Derg and the EPRDF with the appropriation of the Leninist variety of socialism, in which political control is justified on the basis of the need to have a 'vanguard party' to lead a social revolution⁸. Seizing power in 'post-socialist' era, the

8 Article 6 of the 1977 Soviet constitution refers to the party as the 'leading and guiding force of Soviet

EPRDF wedded the idea of the vanguard party with a more ideologically obscure revolutionary democracy. What these ideologies have in common is that they are code words for the same: total control over society. The drive towards political control contravenes one of the tenets of federalism; political pluralism. The EPRDF and its affiliate political organisations have abundantly made intolerance to political pluralism clear both in the 2000 and 2005 regional elections. Backed by the EPRDF, the GPDF resorted to political repression instead of competing to win the minds and hearts of the people in a levelled electoral playing field. Labelling the GPDC leadership as ‘narrow nationalists’, GPDF legitimated its violent exclusion of a regional opposition party from the political process.

The Centre-Periphery Relational Dynamics in Ethiopia

The current issue of citizenship insecurity in the Gambella region expressed in the form of lack of government protection from cross-border incursions is reminiscent of the general pattern the way the Ethiopian national centre has related to its periphery. Across various political regimes the periphery such as Gambella is principally regarded as a place where the centre could extract different kinds of resources, from economic, political to ideological (James and Donham, 1985). The EPRDF has brought a new spin on the centre-periphery mode of relation to the extent that a new peripheral political space is created evident in the creation of four regional states; the GPNRS, the BGPNS, the Afar regional state, the Somali regional state and the affirmative actions connected to that. The basic mode of relation, however, has remained unchanged. This perennial peripheral attitude is informed by a number of factors. One is related to history. The Ethiopian state had its origin in the North-centre part of the country with a core culture that combines Amharic language, Orthodox religion, and Semitic ideology of power (the so-called Solomonic dynasty). Attempts have been made to redefine this national fabric, first by the Derg and more substantially by the EPRDF. A lot remains to be desired, though, before the Ethiopian centre changes its peripheral attitude. The demographic structure of the country also factor into the relational mode. The combined population of the four peripheral regional states constitutes only 7.8% of the country’s population. In that sense, they do not count as ‘significant others’ in the national power game. The cross-border settlement pattern of the population of these regions also comes into the equation. Their settlement pattern straddling Ethiopia’s border with its belligerent neighbours, politics in these regions is either held hostage to geo-politics or their political aspirations is securitized. The colour dimension in Ethiopian national identification further compounds the problem. Government political practice is still informed by the discourse on colour, as if the blacker one is the ‘less Ethiopian’ he becomes. The social, economic and political discriminations, which the discourse of colour signifies, have greatly undermined the borderlanders’ sense of belonging to Ethiopian national identity. Reacting to this peripheral attitude of the Ethiopian centre they have variously identified with alternative national identities across the border where they aspire to be ‘first-class citizens’.

III.5 Natural Resource Scarcity and the Extensive Production Regime

There is a general pattern nation-wide of addressing natural resource scarcity through extensive production. This is done either at the expense of the environment or neighbours. More and more new forest lands are being cleared every year. An

society and the nucleus of its political system, of all state organizations and public organizations.

increasing number of people from resource-poor regions migrate to resource-rich regions and encroach into their neighbour's land, only to reproduce the same cycle of scarcity in the long run. In Gambella, resource-based conflicts such as Anywaa-Nuer, inter-clan conflicts among the Nuer clans and Majangir-Highlanders are related to the strategy of coping with scarcity. Government development policy also espouses the extensive production regime, evident in the drive towards the controversial resettlement program⁹.

As it stands, the Gambella region in general and the Majangir Zone in particular is suffering from the Malthusian effect, the link between population pressure and environmental degradation. Under normal circumstances the link should not be necessarily negative. In fact, there is a possibility that population pressure and resource scarcity could be the source of innovation, which can spur economic growth. The intervening variable is the use of improved agricultural technology. As the number of people within an area rises, the demand for production on that unit of land increases.

Scarcity of natural resources could also be addressed through diversification of livelihoods. One of the prominent features of the Gambella economy is the conspicuous absence of the indigenes from the business sector. Coming from relatively more developed regions, with wider social networks and an entrepreneurial culture, the Highlanders dominate the business sector in the Gambella region. However, the Highlanders become dominant economically, differential accumulation of economic power has created a potential for conflict in the context of politicisation of migration. The indigenes regard the economic success of the Highlanders with consternation, which echoes the political closure, 'Gambella is for the Gambellans'. Ways should be explored to create a new economic space for the indigenes such as enhancing cross-border trade in which they will have comparative advantages with their social networks that straddle the border. Decoupling economic life chances from social identity goes a long way in fostering multiple identities and creating crosscutting ties.

Concluding remarks

The paper discussed the various levels of conflict in reference to the wider political process at the national level. The struggle for political power among the ethnic elites is a reflection of the contentious issue of political ownership of the multi-ethnic regional states such as Gambella. It seems that the political structure that ethnic federalism is built on is designed in reference to the so-called five 'mother states' where a single ethnic group is politically in charge. The multi-ethnic regional states are 'up for grab' for the various groups who compete for political power and resources with various narratives of entitlement instead of building a viable regional political community. The conflict situation in the Gambella region is also related to the introduction of territorialized ethnicity and the politicisation of migration that followed this. The creation of territorially bounded ethno-political units is colliding with the facts on the ground, a heterogeneous regional population which is kept dynamic by the continuous population movement across the political boundaries. Examining the current conflict between the EPRDF and armed groups of Anywaa brings us to another national level dynamics; the contradiction between a highly acclaimed project of decentralisation based on a generous constitutional provision for self government on the one hand and

⁹ As part of EPRDF's 'New Coalition for Food Security in Ethiopia', the government has launched a large scale resettlement program since 2003 with the objective to enable 2.2 million chronically food insecure people to attain food security.

infringement of regional autonomy on the other. Unless Ethiopia's ethnic federalism accommodates political pluralism it is likely that the conflict situation will prevail. The interface between the regional and national level conflict dynamics also reflects the continuity of the centre-periphery relational mode. The Ethiopian centre has always related to its periphery in a predatory way. This is not only because of the geographic distance but also the historical, social and cultural differences which the discourse on skin colour signifies.

References

- Aalen, L. 2002. *Ethnic Federalism in a Dominant Party System: The Ethiopian Experience 1991-2000*. Chr. Michelson Institute, Development Studies and Human Rights.
- Alem Habte. 2003. *Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Background, Present Conditions and Future Prospects*. Paper Submitted to the Second EAF International Symposium on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia, July 11-12, 2003. Addis Ababa.
- Armstrong, J. 1977. *Federalism in the USSR: Ethnic and Territorial Aspects*. The Journal of Federation. 1977; 7.
- Assefa Fiseha. 2005. *Federalism and the Adjudication of Constitutional Issues: The Ethiopian Experience*. NILR.
- Bahargava, R. 2005. 'The Evolution and Distinctiveness of India's Linguistic Federalism'. In: Turton, D. (ed.) *Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in a Comparative Perspective*, James Curry
- Bahru Zewde. 1976. *Relations Between Ethiopia and the Sudan on the Western Frontier*. PHD Dissertation. University of London.
- Clapham, C. 2002. 'Controlling Space in Ethiopia.' In: James Wendy et al. *Remapping Ethiopia*. Oxford, James Curry.
- . 2005. 'Afterwards'. In: Turton, D. (ed.) *Ethnic Federalism*
- Collins, R. 1971. *Land Beyond the Rivers: The Southern Sudan, 1898-1918*. New Haven: Yale University press.
- Dereje Feyissa, 2005. 'The experience of the Gambella regional state'. In: Turton, D (ed.) *Ethnic Federalism*.
- Human Rights Watch. 2005. *Targeting the Anuak: Crimes Against Humanity in Ethiopia's Gambella Region*.
- James, W. and D. Donham. 1986. *The Southern Marches of Imperial Ethiopia: Essays in History and Social Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kelly, R. 1985. *The Nuer Conquest: The Structure and Development of an Expansionist System*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Keller, E. 2002. *Ethnic Federalism, Fiscal Reform, Development and Democratisation in Ethiopia*. African Journal of Political Science. V.7, N.1
- Kurimoto, E. 1997. *Politicisation of Ethnicity in Gambella*. In: K.Fukui, E. Kurimoto and M. Shigeta (eds.) *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the 13th International Conference*.
- Suberu, R. 2006. 'Federalism and the Management of Ethnic Conflict: The Nigerian Experience'. In: Turton (ed.) *Ethnic Federalism*.
- Turton, D. 2006. 'Introduction'. In: *Ethnic Federalism*
- The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia*. 1995. Addis Ababa.

- The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia*. 1995. Results for Gambella Region. Addis Ababa: Central Statistics Authority.
- Vaughan, S. 2003. Ethnicity and Power in Ethiopia. PHD Thesis. University of Edinburgh.
- Young, J. 1999. Along Ethiopia's Western Frontiers: Gambella and Benishangul in Transition. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. 1999, 37:321-346.

The Wayyane in Tigray and the reconstruction of the Ethiopian government in the 1940's

Momoka Maki¹

Emperor Haile Sellassie attempted to re-establish the centralized government after the liberation from Italian occupation in 1941. The years between 1941 and 1945 were some of the most chaotic in modern Ethiopian history. The new government confronted many challenges throughout Ethiopia. The Wayyane happened in 1943 was one of the largest revolt against the Government. The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the Wayyane from the perspectives of the participants and to analyze the causes and consequences of the Wayyane.

Introduction

After the withdrawal of Italian forces from Ethiopia in 1941, Emperor Haile Sellassie attempted to re-establish the centralized government. The years between 1941 and 1945 were some of the most chaotic in modern Ethiopian history. Emperor Haile Selassie and the British government, which supported the emperor and promoted the Italian withdrawal from Ethiopia, tried to establish a new empire. The new government confronted many challenges throughout Ethiopia.

In 1943, shortly after the political reform, there was a major 'revolt' against the central government in Tigray. This 'revolt', called the *Wayyane*, was organized by peasants whose aim was to take over the military camp and provincial government.

Gebre Tareke's study² is the most important and the only comprehensive work on the Wayyane. He used the Ministry of Interior's material, in the main, to analyze the central government's policy toward the Wayyane, and provided important information on the government's attitude. So far, few attempts have been made to analyze the internal structure of Wayyane.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the Wayyane from the perspectives of the participants and to analyze the causes and consequences of the Wayyane.

To analyze the Wayyane, I used data from interviews with participants in Tigray³, British records, Foreign Office and War Office papers, and records from the Ethiopian government. The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, I analyze the series of disturbances that occurred before the Wayyane in Tigray, and the central government's policy toward Tigray, in order to understand the background of the Wayyane. Then, to describe the Wayyane, as well as the organization and mobilization

¹ Institute of International and Cultural Studies, Tsuda College, 2-1-1 Tsuda-cho, Kodaira-city, Tokyo, 187-8577, Japan. Author's e-mail address; hana100@hotmail.com, or, maki100@tsuda.ac.jp

² Gebre Tareke, *Ethiopia: power and protest-Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*, the Red Sea Press, 1996.

³ My research and interview was held between April 2003 to Jan 2005. The number of informants is more than 150 in total. I thank the Kodansha Noma Asia Africa scholarship for generous financial assistance for my research during 2003-2005 in Ethiopia and in London.

of people involved, I examine the characteristics of the leadership and the motives of the Wayyane participants using participant testimonies. Finally, I discuss how the relationship between Tigray and the central government changed as a result of political reform and the Wayyane in the 1940's.

The Social and political background in Tigray

Before the Italian occupation the Central government permitted self-governance in Tigray. In the 1930's, Tigray was governed as two parts by two local nobles; Ras Seyum and Ras Gugusa, both of whom were the grandsons of Emperor Yohannes IV. Each headed his own administration, military and jurisdiction. They both appointed the governors called *Teklenia* or *Dembenia*⁴ for each area that fell under their jurisdiction. A tax collector, called *Chika-shum*, was selected by the community or appointed by the local governor.

The noble class of northern Ethiopia was divided into two groups, the *Masafint* and the *Mekuanent*⁵. The *Masafint* class was hereditary and occupied the high ranks appointed by emperor; many had marital ties to the Emperor. Most of them received the title of Ras, Dejazmatch(Dej), or Fitaurari(Fit), etc. Members of the *Mekuanent* class were given their title from the *Masafint* class and received appointments in the local government as administrators, judges, or police officers. Most of them were rich in their hometowns and were considered as reliable people.

When the Italians invaded in 1935, Tigray was the first battlefield; severe fierce battles occurred in Temben and Maichew. The Tigray nobles led most of the Tigray people, including the peasants, against the Italians. However, once the occupation began, Tigray administrators experienced the occupation in different ways. Some of the *Masafint* nobles were captured or surrendered to Italian forces during the battle; others escaped and continued to fight the occupiers. One exception was Dej. Haile Selassie Gugsu who escaped to the Italian colony of Eritrea soon after the invasion started and was called traitor⁶. The *Mekuanent* class people's attitude toward the Italian occupation was much more valid than the *Masafint* nobles. Some continued the resistance against the Italian occupation from the countryside, beyond the administrative center. Some were appointed to the lowest positions in the government and charged with the task of finding and bringing in those who had escaped. Some refused to participate in the colonial administration and went back to the field to tend to the crops.

Tigray bordered Eritrea, and there were Tigrayans who lived in Eritrea; Tigray was one of the areas that the Italians ruled effectively, even at the village level. After the people lost their administrator, they submitted to colonial rule by the Italian and Eritrean *banda*.

After the liberation, in the provincial government of Mekele, the political reform led to a centralization of the administration. The emperor and British advisers planned to modernize the administrative system. The central government tried to diminish the control and the influence of the Tigray nobles, especially Ras Seyum who was the most important noble. The central government summoned him to Addis Ababa and forced

⁴ These titles were mentioned in the interview and also mentioned in the provincial proclamation issued by the Central government in 1941.WO230/16. *Teklenia* was title for the local administrator and *Dembenia* was the title for the local administrator in Church land. .

⁵ Gilkes, Patrick, *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, Julian Friedman Publishers, 1975, p25.

⁶ Bahru Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa University Press, 1991, p.154.

him to accept the new administration. The first proclamation of the Tigray administration was issued by the central government in November 1941.

In that proclamation, the central government appointed Ras Seyum as governor-general of Tigray and, three sub-provincial governors were also appointed; Dej. Gabrehiwot to Adowa (western Tigray), Dej. Kassa to Adigrat (central Tigray) and Dej. Abbay to Mekele (southern Tigray). All of them were Tigrayan nobles and had experienced in the local administration before the Italian invasion⁷.

The proclamation made no mention on the appointment of director-general, who was second in provincial administration under the governor-general. The central government appointed Fit. Kifle Dadi⁸, the famous Amhara administrator, as director-general of Tigray after the *Gaz* operation, and prohibited Ras Seyum from returning to Tigray. The director-general could exercise administrative power without the influence of Ras Seyum and carried out political reform under the direct control of the central government. Fit. Kifle Dadi appointed numerous Amhara officers to the Tigray provincial office, and played the main role in establishing the new administrative system.

The Background of the Wayyane: the *Gaz* and the Wajirat incident

Although the Wayyane was the largest and most famous 'revolt' in Tigray, other disturbances occurred in the process of decolonization that illustrates the social confusion in Tigray. Two notable incidents took place before the Wayyane; the raiding of the Wajirat and Raya Azebo people⁹ against the Afar and the conflict between the Wajirat and the sub-provincial governor. Although Gebru's work¹⁰ mentions these incidents, his interpretation differs from participant testimonial.

The raiding against the Afar by the Wajirat and the Raya Azebo people occurred in 1941 soon after the Italian withdrawal. Raids among the Raya, Azebo, Wajirat and Afar had been going on for centuries. The act of such raid was locally known as *Gaz*¹¹. In addition to the temporary gains of livestock, the raids caused regional instability. Raiding was prohibited during the Italian occupation but recommenced upon their withdrawal in 1941. the first post-Italian occupation raid occurred in June 1941. British military personnel reported the outbreak of *Gaz* to the Ethiopian central government. *Gaz* raiders were estimated as being 15.000 and 30.000 in number; they attacked the Afar for nearly a year. The British military and the Ethiopian central government feared that the practice of *Gaz* would upset regional stability. The *Gaz* raiders went to the Awsa area near Djibouti through Wollo province. *Gaz* raiders and a British military patrol clashed near Sordo around Dese on October 29th, 1941, killing one British officer and 10 soldiers; nearly 50 from *Gaz* raiders were also killed¹². While this clash with the British military was an unintentional, it resulted in a governmental policy aimed at suppressing the raiders. A military force, numbering about 40.000 soldiers, was dispatched in May 1942 with the aim of suppression. *Gaz* raiders feared a confrontation

⁷ WO230/16

⁸ Fitaurari Kifle Dadi was appointed in November 1942. Gebru mentioned the first Director-General of Tigray after liberation was Alemayehou Tenna. Gebru, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

⁹ Raya and Azebo are Muslim Oromo living between Tigray and Wollo. Trimingham, J. S. Spencer, *Islam in Ethiopia*, Oxford University Press, 1952, pp. 193-195.

¹⁰ Gebru, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

¹¹ Tarekegn Gebreyesus, "Gaz", in Siegbert Uhlig(ed): *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol.2 (D-H), Wiesbaden, 2005. Trimingham, *op. cit.*, p. 195. In order to organize the *Gaz*, they elect the leader of *Gaz*, called *Abo Gaz*, Trimingham, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹² WO230/16

with this large military force and surrendered. They surrendered the stolen livestock and most of their weapons¹³, exception of rifles deemed necessary for self defence. This incident revealed the instability of post colonial era rural politics.

The other serious situation was also caused by the Wajirat. Dej. Abbay Kahsay attempted to rule the Wajirat by force but was overthrown in May 1943. Some local governors fought alongside Dej. Abay were killed, but most of them, including Dej. Abbay, were captured by the Wajirat. This incident caused further political instability in southern Tigray.

Gebbru set out the Wajirat incident as the first stage of the Wayyane¹⁴. His view reflected the government's view, which interpreted all disturbances as 'revolts' against the government. However, it is important to analyze each disturbance separately because many disturbances occurred after the Italian withdrawal and the motivations of the Wajirat and the Wayyane participants differed.

The Wajirat refused to be governed directly by the provincial government and they established a self-governing community assembly, called *Demer Gura Garbo*¹⁵. *Demer Gura Garbo* acted as the highest decision-making body of the Wajirat; it also works as the court, the police and also the tax collection.

Ras Gugusa, who governed southern Tigray during the 1930's, attempted to govern the Wajirat, however they continued the practice of *Gaz* and disturbed the regional order. Although Ras Gugusa appointed his follower as the governor of the Wajirat, the Wajirat rejected his authority and fought against his army. The Wajirat were largely successful in defeating the governor's forces, and negotiated a self-governing administration in exchange for a honey tax that was paid to the governor. During the Italian occupation, the Italians prohibited *Demer Gura Garbo* and *Gaz*, and governed the Wajirat directly. The Wajirat resisted the Italian governance, but they were compelled to surrender to its rule. Although there is no direct evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the Wajirat returned to self-governing rule after the Italian withdrawal. They also initiated the first *Gaz* against the Afar soon after the liberation, which revealed their intentions to resume their former way of life.

After Dej. Abay was captured, the central government send the son of the provincial governor, Dej. Mangasya Seyum¹⁶, to serve orders of extradition for the captured governors. The Wajirat did not challenge the authority of the provincial government and accepted the requests for extradition. Although there were two military camps in Southern Tigray, neither the central government nor the provincial government attempted to attack the Wajirat, which revealed the weakness of the government after the liberation.

These two incidents occurred before the Wayyane, and established the resumption of tradition. However, the government and the British viewed these incidents and the Wayyane action as acts of aggression against the central government.

¹³ Sandford Collection, Wollo File. 15.000 guns and 50.000 livestock were handed over to the Imperial military.

¹⁴ Gebbru, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

¹⁵ Informant, G/M, A/H, Wajirat, May 2003.

¹⁶ Dej. Mangasya Seyum (1926-) was given the title of Ras in 1966 and was appointed as the Governor-General of Tigray in 1960 after his father's death.

Structure of the Wayyane

According to the British War Office report on operations in Tigray¹⁷, the Wayyane action occurred in southern Tigray between August and October 1943; participants attacked the imperial military camp before occupying the provincial capital Mekele. The participants were mainly peasants and were estimated to be more than 20.000 in number.

Gebru described the process of suppression and the governmental attitude toward the 'revolt'. He also described the cause of Wayyane action but did not analyze the social and political situation in the local communities in southern Tigray. In this study, I analyze the structure of the Wayyane and its motives of its participants, using testimonials from the participants.

Organization and mobilization

The Wayyane expanded from southern to eastern Tigray; the main Wayyane participant areas were Mekele, Kilte Awaralo, Tmebem, Enderta, Samre, Hintaulo and Alaje. This was the largest 'revolt' that had occurred not only in Tigray but in all of Ethiopia during the imperial era. To understand the organization and mobilization of the Wayyane, one needs to examine its leadership and organization.

Gebru mentioned that the Wayyane action was led by Blatta Haile Mariam and a number of *Masafint*¹⁸. However, my research revealed no *Masafint*'s participation; it was impossible to obtain enough information on their activities to assess their involvement because some of the participants had passed away and some of the nobles had escaped from Tigray during the Derg. The Wayyane area is relatively large and consists of various types of terrain which would have made it difficult for a single leader to organize the whole area in such short time. It is safe to assume that each area had its own leader who organized the community. Gebru's research provided the prisoner list of Wayyane¹⁹, which listed the names of many leaders. I selected several names from this list and obtained information about them from their families and friends. One of them the prisoners I contacted was Bashay Gugsu Mangasya's family. Bashay Gugsu was born in Adisulst in Hintaulo, and he became the leader of this area. His father was a local governor before the Italian invasion. Bashay Gugsu was part of the Italian regime in this area and learned how to use modern weapons under the Italians and said to receive his title Bashay from the Italian²⁰. He had considerable influence over the whole Hintaulo area and collaborated with the other Hintaulo leaders. Hintalo was believed to be one of the main general assembly areas for the Wayyane.

Other communities used Bashay Gugsu's example to organize themselves. Leaders who had enough influence tried to organize the local people. After the liberation from the Italian occupation, every community had many troubles to confront. They would gather together to discuss their problems. The *Makuanent* class leaders played important roles in the subsequent mobilization; they discussed their community's problems with leaders of other communities. Eventually, each community sent representatives to a meeting in May Droho, which is 1 km from the centre of Hintaulo. Here the representatives discussed their communities' problems with the other leaders. The

¹⁷ WO32/1082:Tigre Operation

¹⁸ Gebru. *op. cit.*, pp. 113-115.

¹⁹ Gebru, *op. cit.*, p.240, note 79.

²⁰ Informant; K/F, A/G, Hintaulo, December 2004.

leaders discovered that their common problems were the activity of the *shifta* (bandits) and a lack of governance for establishing order.

Not all of the *Makuanent* class participated in the Wayyane. Some supported the central government side and fought against the Wayyane.

Blatta Haile Mariam was different from the other leaders. Most participants viewed his leadership as valid. Someone thought of him as a great military leader; others deemed him “*shifta*” because of a confrontation he had with another local noble, which resulted in that noble’s death and Blatta Haile Mariam escaped from Enderta with some of his followers²¹. However, even in exile, he still had influence in Enderta, Kilte Awalaro and Wukro, because of his family connections and his father’s occupation²².

Many leaders’ names were mentioned in the interviews I conducted, but it is difficult to find them 60 years after the event. Many leaders were from the lower class of *Makuanent*. They or their fathers had served as the head of community or as tax collector before the invasion. Some worked for the Italian administration and others had refused to participate in the colonial administration. In some areas, the participants explained that there were no leaders and they had simply gathered to discuss their daily problems. Such meetings were customary, even before the Italian occupation, and the elders in the community would lead the meeting.

The Motives behind the Wayyane

The driving forces behind the Wayyane are debatable. According to British operational report, the Wayyane participants required the return of Tigray governor Ras Seyum from Addis Ababa. Alternatively, some analysts interpret Wayyane opposition as based on antagonism against the new administration led by a central government. The participants were mainly peasants but leaders were from *Makuanent* class, highly regarded in their communities. The key to understand what caused the Wayyane action lies in learning what was discussed at the general assembly meeting held at May Droho, and what problems each regional leader brought up for discussion.

As previously stated, the most common problems were activity of the *shifta* and the lack of governance for establishing order. The *shifta* attacked villages stealing food and livestock. The peasants had to defend themselves with no help from the central government. It is unclear whether the central government appointed local governors to Tigray in late 1941 but, if those appointments occurred, it is unlikely that the governors were appointed to deal with the local administration issue, such as community safety.

In Hintaulo, Fit. Abesha was reappointed to the governor’s position by the central government²³. He attempted to confront the security problem, particularly that of controlling the *shifta*. He and his followers tried to capture the *shifta* but in so doing they also threatened the lives of the people. Thus, the Hintaulo people endured hardships brought on by the *shifta* and the local governor, which created a situation in which the Wayyane could be perceived as a reasonable alternative.

Enderta was the one of the main Wayyane areas. It shared a border with the provincial capital Mekele, and was an important military point having the military camps in Endaysos and in Quiha. In 1941, the Imperial military, supported by the British military, replaced the Italian occupation. The imperial military consisted of

²¹ Informant; H/A, Aragra, June 2003.

²² Blatta Haile Mariam’s mother was from the Adigrat and his father was Ras Seyum’s follower and appointed to the governor of Gujet, near the Adigrat before the Italian invasion. Informant; B/M, Adigdom, January 2004.

²³ Informant: K/F, A/G, Hintaulo, December 2004. .

soldiers from Amhara and Tigray, in the main. While peasants in rural areas were unaware of administrative changes, they did observe the political and military changes occurring in their communities. According to some informants, imperial military soldiers stole food from the people and established checkpoints near the military camps. The peasants were afraid of the soldiers, whom they perceived as a daily threat. Rumors that the provincial office was staffed by Amhara officers spread from the Enderta and Mekele to other areas. One informant said that he was captured by the provincial government as a suspected Wayyane participant and with 200-300 people in Mekele²⁴.

The effects of Wajirat incident on the Samre area is important, as it related to the Wayyane action. The governor of Samre, Dej. Atsubaha was killed in the Wajirat incident in May 1943. His son Fit. Iyasu said that his father's death caused a serious power struggle in the area, which created a vacuum in which the Wayyane participants were able spread their influence. When Fit. Iyasu left Samre to receive his appointment to succeed his father, the follower of Dej. Atsubaha fought the Samre Wayyane and killed him²⁵. Fit. Iyasu and other participants' testimonials clarified that the Wayyane activities expanded rapidly after the Dej. Astbaha's death. This same scenario might also have occurred in other southern Tigray areas. While it is difficult to ascertain the timing and the logic behind the Wayyane against the military camp, the Wajirat incident certainly was a contributing factor.

The main agenda of the general assembly was how to manage the community without support from the central government. They decided to enact countermeasures against *shifita*, in order to protect their communities by their own initiatives. For example, they tried to compel the families of the *shifita* to persuade them to stop their attacks. Their agenda also expanded to political and social problems. However, the central government saw these actions as a threat to their rule.

The general assembly attempted to pursuit those who refused to participate in their activities²⁶. However, because nearly all the people in southern Tigray participated in the assembly, the punishment was needless²⁷.

The process of the armed 'Revolt' and its aftermath

There were no exact records to explain the purpose of "revolt" and the reason why the Wayyane attacked the military camp. Some informants explained that the Wayyane participants at first called themselves as *Arena* (stream) and tried to change their life and govern the community by themselves without the intervention of the government. It was said that the attack of the military camp was decided at May Droho and they informed each community.

In August 1943, the Wayyane participants gathered near the Quiha military camp. Early in the morning they attacked the Quiha camp. Shortly thereafter they took possession of the camp and the remaining soldiers. They released the lower-ranking soldiers and acquired more weapons. Next, they attacked the Endaysos camp, and after a fierce battle, captured it as well. Although some general in the imperial military was able to escape to the north, General Isayas was captured by the Wayyane²⁸. After the victories against the military, the rebels easily captured the provincial capital of Mekele.

²⁴ Informant; M/W, Quiha, June 2003.

²⁵ Informant: Fit. Iyasu Atsbaha, Mekele, December 2003. His information was also confirmed by Samre informant H/H, Samre, January 2007.

²⁶ The punishment were forfeit of cattle or to make wear in women's cloth.

²⁷ Informant B/M, Adigdom, January 2004.

²⁸ Informant: B/M, Adigdom, April 2004.

The informants explained that Mekele was overrun with Wayyane participants, and administration officials fled the city. The rebels' victory was short lived as the imperial military, along with the British military, advanced to Tigray from Addis Ababa. The final battle took place in the Alaje Mountains. The Wayyane were defeated by the large and fully equipped army. As the remaining participants fled the battlefield, the British military bombed from Alaje Mountain to Mekele²⁹, and then the city itself. The Wayyane militiant "revolt" lasted for three months.

After the Wayyane had been suppressed, the imperial military raided southern Tigray, capturing leaders and confiscating weapons. Bashay Gugusa was captured by Imperial military and taken to Addis Ababa with other leaders. Blatta Haile Mariam escaped to the Afar region and remained there until 1947. Most of the influential leaders were captured after the Wayyane and taken to Addis Ababa. They were prohibited from returning to Tigray for one year; no one was sentenced to death³⁰ and all were allowed to return to Tigray except of Bashay Gugsu and Blatta Haile Mariam. Blatta Haile Mariam was sent to Jinka and was not allowed to leave for 30 years. Bashay Gugsu was also not allowed to return to Tigray, because the central government feared his influence³¹. However, the central government tried to make use of his military skills and sent him with a group of soldiers to suppress other rebellions in the southern Ethiopia.

The imperial military pursued the leaders of the Wayyane and left ruined villages in their wake; soldiers forced people to feed them and killed their live stocks. The central government appointed Ras Abebe Aregay as governor-general instead of Ras Seyum, who was the General of the imperial military and head of the operation against the Wayyane. Ras Abebe Aregay remained in Tigray until 1947 and, under him, the political reform proceeded.

Conclusion

There has been previous research conducted concerning the Wayyane, but this is the first study that has focused on the participants' experiences. The participants interviewed revealed the social confusion following liberation from the Italian occupation. This study focused on two disturbances that preceded the Wayyane, and analyzed the role each played in the Wayyane. The practice of *Gaz* was significant because it revealed the region's return to their traditional ways; the Wajirat incident was also important because it signified the region's desire to return to their traditional practice of self-governance. The Wayyane participants tried to govern themselves, selecting lower *Makuanent* and elders as their leaders. These leaders then discussed their community's problems with the leaders of other areas in the general assembly. While the central government considered the Wayyane as a form of rebellion against its authority, it was also a social demonstration that highlighted certain community needs, such as defense. While the main cause of the Wayyane might never be known, the testimonials I have gathered provide detailed background information about the social conditions at the time that influenced the uprising.

Although it is difficult to determine just how much the Wayyane affected political reform in Tigray, it certainly played a part. The central government initiated reform with logistical support from the military. The Wayyane influenced the way the central government re-established order in the region in that it implemented policies with the

²⁹ Gilkes, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

³⁰ Informant: A/T, Quiha, October 2003.

³¹ Informant: K/F, A/G, Hintaulo, December 2004, N/K, Addis Ababa, December 2004.

goal of preventing similar uprisings in the future. As a result of political reforms after Wayyane, Tigray lost its autonomy and fell under the central government.

Bibliography

- Bahru Zewde. 1991. *A History of Modern Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa University Press.
- Erlich, Haggai. 1981. "Tigrean Nationalism, British Involvement and Haila-Sellasse's emerging Absolutism –Northern Ethiopia, 1941-43", *Asian and African Studies*, vol.15, pp. 191-227.
- Gebru Tareke. 1996. *Ethiopia: power and protest-Peasant Revolts in the Twentieth Century*. The Red Sea Press.
- Gilkes, Patrick. 1975. *The Dying Lion: Feudalism and Modernization in Ethiopia*, Julian Friedman Publishers.
- Perham, Margery. 1969. *The Government of Ethiopia*, Faber and Faber.
- Tarekegn Gebreyesus. 2005. "Gaz", in Siegbert Uhlig(ed): *Encyclopedia Aethiopica*, vol.2, (D-H), Wiesbaden.
- Trimingham, J. S. Spencer. 1952. *Islam in Ethiopia*, Oxford University Press.

Is pluralism a fiasco in Ethiopia?

Solomon Ali¹

This paper addresses a fiasco pertaining to the application of a pluralist politics in Ethiopia. Ethio-diversity exhibits the dichotomy between democracy and ethnic politics. The fiasco in applying a pluralist politics rests either in the 'democratization of ethnicism' or in the 'ethnicization of democracy'. The continued shift of political paradigms and regroupings by political actors expressive, at best, of their lack of accommodation, and, at worst, of crisis and desperation indicate the fiasco.

Introduction

The specter of democracy is everywhere in the world. The old boundaries that divided mankind into two systems -communism and capitalism -have disintegrated. The former, that lost the world political game, left among its exponents a contagious legacy of interpreting social reality along class and ethnicity lines. This is also the case for Ethiopia's leftist elites since the 1960's. The Ethiopian leftists euphorically welcomed the import of socialist ideology and sang to the tune of that famous 1848 Communist Manifesto's: "The specter of communism....". Surprisingly, it is that same generation who are today singing the 'specter of democracy haunting the whole world'. History happens to them "twice: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce" (Marx. 1983:12). With the change of the tune they are compelled to pass through the litmus paper of western democracy: free market, pluralism, freedom of the individual and the like. However, the foundations on which both communism and capitalism were and are supposed to blossom in Ethiopia still remain predominantly backward to sustain the various imported and homemade ideologies.

The legacy of the country's autocratic/authoritarian culture and the absence of a strong civil society further affect the democratization drive in Ethiopia.... Sadly, the autocratic/authoritarian culture continues to have a pervasive effect both on the behavior of the competing elites and the *modus operandi* of the Ethiopian State. One such effect is its hampering of the development of civil society-a crucial factor in pluralist democracy. Merera (2003:8)

Whether the historical tuning effects a sad melody or not one has to accept them as zigzags of great events of one and the same process of a single human history. There were such turning points in the history/legacy of different nations, the problems of which were settled on various battlegrounds. The hitherto economic, political, cultural, psychological, ideological, military battles are nothing but chapters in the continuing annals of human history.

This article enquires at how pluralism is detrimentally affected by a dwindling role political actors in Ethiopia have been playing in the last four decades. It tries to indicate

¹ The author is currently working at the ministry of culture and tourism; solomonali222@yahoo.co.uk

that the problem rests in the irreconcilable shifts of ideologies that are derailed from the socio-cultural and economic realities of Ethiopia.

Conceptual Framework

Pluralism... is the guarantee that the diversity in modern society of ideological and spiritual trends, social groups and institutions, economic interests and alliances, professional roles and functions, political organizations, parties and instances will be recognized and approved, and that they will have scope for free activity to the extent to which they, for their part, approve and support the state and constitutional order that is necessary for all the plurality of forces to enjoy their rights, and that they will have the protection and opportunity to act in an environment of mutual respect, exchange, competition, and conflict. Schewan and Schewan(1974) cited in Shakhnazarov (1982:156).

What is understood by pluralism is that it is a conception irreducible to a single principle (*Dictionary of Philosophy*, 1984: 329). Pluralism is opposed and is an alternative to communalism and individualism. Communalism is argued against because it unifies people coercively by undermining their individual rights and interests, creating, in most instances, unstable, monist political systems. Individualism is also rejected since institutional arrangements in democratic political systems require common understanding and commitment. Connolly (in: *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*. 1987:376). Consequently, features of pluralist ideology in a democratically pluralist system necessitate competitive contradiction varying from syncretism, equality, stability on one hand, to diversity, ideational elimination, cleavage, and etc. on the other, Archer (1988:245; 270).

Multi-ethnic societies complicate the democratic character of pluralism when socio-cultural dynamism is added on top of it and create cultural pluralism. Archer (1988:67). This dynamism makes the application of a pluralist politics more intricate in traditional societies like Ethiopia, which is lacking both the subjective and objective conditions qualifying it for a politically pluralist society. Inglehart (1990:24) stresses the dialectical relationship between cultural patterns and economic development. According to him for economic development and modern democracy three factors seem particularly crucial: (a) the emergence of a politically powerful commercial-industrial bourgeoisie;(b) the development of preconditions that facilitate mass participation in politics; and (c) the development of mass support for democratic institutions, and feelings of interpersonal trust that extend even to the members of opposing parties. Inglehart (1990:22).

The origin of the fiasco

By way of the above conceptual framework it is clear that modern understanding of democracy in multi-ethnic Ethiopia confronts the so-called national question/ ethnic nationalism. The genesis of the fiasco starts in the 1960's with the Ethiopian Students Movement (ESM). ESM's four decades ideological evolution is marked by mutually contradictory agenda and series of double defeats (see Merera 2003: 97-99) that can be characterized as full of hatreds and intrigues. The saga of forty years can be outlined as follows: a) the leftist ESM and its offshoots attempted to solve the national question from a Marxist point of view within the wider socialist unitary state context; b) part of the offshoots opted for secession shifting the Marxist class ideology to a chauvinist/narrow nationalist ideology and c) today various political forces in Ethiopia are claiming positions ranging from a sort of feudal-monarchic unitary, liberal democracy, revolutionary democracy and ethno-nationalist ideologies. The following

quotation² is a very good political autobiography for a personality who passed through a litmus paper of '*isms*':

The history of organized politics in Ethiopia goes back to the early 1960's. From the very beginning there have been two forces at work: the ethnic/regional movements and the multi-ethnic political forces. From the outset the two groups have had a love-hate relationship (Kiflu, 1993& 1998; Andargachew T., 1993).

The first major political force to pursue a multi-ethnic agenda was the Ethiopian Student Movement (ESM). Moreover, the MEISON group (1968) and the EPRP (1972), which dominated the country's politics in the early days of the Ethiopian revolution were the direct offspring of the student movement in terms of their leadership, membership composition and political agendas. They have been multi-ethnic movements both organizationally and ideologically, despite their present shift in ideological orientation from their Marxist past.

Ironically, in spite of their adherence to the same political philosophy and the similarity of their political programmes... they fought each other more than they fought the military regime and the national liberation movements. MEISON was lured to the side of the military regime and worked with it to destroy the EPRP while the EPRP on its part was lured to the side of the Eritrean liberation fronts to undertake the armed struggle. Again ironically, the unholy alliance both groups forged did not work for long. The Military later turned against MEISON and decapitated it, while the EPLF turned against EPRP and helped its destruction at the hands of the TPLF.... MEISON and EPRP were all but defeated by the military regime in the 1970's....

From the early 1980's multi-ethnic parties have been forced to live in the shadow of the much larger national/ethnic movements. Moreover, the defeat of the multi-ethnic parties also led to mass defection of their members to the ethnic-based parties and, as is usually the case, defectors tend to turn very hostile to their former associates. Merera (2003:108-109)

The continued shift in the political paradigm (ideology) by political actors expressive, at best, of the lack of accommodation, and, at worst, of crisis and desperation indicates the fiasco. The continuation of the same old story masked with new versions of regroupings³ from the 1970's up to present is nothing but the transformation of the fiasco into a double tragedy.

The tragedy of multi-ethnic parties in Ethiopia, and for that matter the tragedy of political movements in the country generally is their tendency to subscribe to zero-sum game politics. That is to say, like the power elites they have been playing a political

² In the quotation MEISON refers to *Mä'ison* (the All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (AESM); EPRP (Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party); TPLF (Tigrayan People's Liberation Front) and EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front).

³ Almost all leading members of the now existing political parties and organizations in Ethiopia are offshoots of the Ethiopian Students Movement (ESM) in the 1960's, whose members on the various political and ideological battle grounds of the 1970's, the 1980's the 1990's and the 2000's, clustered into AESM, EPRP, TPLF, Workers Party of Ethiopia (WPE), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to mention but few. Today some of these turned out to be Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD), Union of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), Oromo National Congress (ONC), Ethiopian Democratic Unity Party (EDUP) and the like. For instance, today, some members of CUD are former EPRP and WPE; some members of ONC are former AESM, EPRP and WPE; some OLF are WPE, AESM, etc.; some UEDF are EPRP, AESM, WPE and some EDUP are WPE and the like....During the Military regime, some WPE were EPRP, AESM, OLF, TPLF....

game of take-all-or-lose-all. This has been and continues to be the malaise of Ethiopian politics for which there appears to be no easy medicine. Merera (2003: 110)

Yes, to the malaise of Ethiopian politics. Does this malaise mean to the Ethiopian elites or to the Ethiopian peoples who have always been suffering whenever and wherever the elites 'bend the twig too far' so that the twig 'will lash back with destructive ferocity'. The difficulty in the search for the cure is further aggravated when the search for a democratic option is marred by the 'ethnicization' of democracy.

...ethno-nationalism becomes inflamed and dangerous if it develops a sense of collective humiliation, either real or imagined. This can arise, too, from a sense of being swamped by a numerically dominant culture, or of being overwhelmed by one that presents itself as being superior or of simply assuming a proprietary right to a dominant position. Then ethno-nationalism can take on an assertive aggression. The Oxford philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin, who has written much on this subject, uses the vivid imaginary of the poet Schiller to liken cultural nationalism to a bent twig. Bend the twig too far, Schiller warns, and it will lash back with destructive ferocity. (Sparks. (1996) In: *The Power of Culture* (1996:100).

The degree of the destructive ferocity pluralism is facing in Ethiopia is expressed in the desperate shift of identity of the multi-ethnic political forces to ethnic-nationalism -a shift indicative of political identity crisis the consequence of which is hard to imagine in theory leave alone in practice.

One case in the 'bent the twig...' issue in the Ethiopian elite politics is the "Land to the Tiller" slogan articulated as mass mobilization by the ESM in the 1960's. The issue is that the mass interest is *economic*. The bent is that the interests of the masses were met by a Marxist-Leninist political *ideology* the ESM were articulating then. The ESM ideology also prescribed a national operation theory 'inviting the masses for history making' without taking into account the objective historical context. Merera (2003:96;182). This justifies the gap between the 'wrong' importation of ideologies that were and are still fashions of political elites and the objective reality of the Ethiopian people that by then were languishing under the yoke of feudalism.

According to many observers, the land issue was the best weapon of mass mobilization for the Oromo and the other southern Ethiopian elites.... following the 1975 land reform, the OLF lost its best weapon... to the military regime. For the Ethiopian peasantry... who had been mercilessly exploited and suffered as tenants under a back ward agrarian feudalism much effort was not needed... following the land nationalization of the 1975. In other words, it was the land that the military regime used to sustain itself by mobilizing the peasantry for its military ventures and to stay in power. The present regime is trying to do the same. Merera (2003:183).

Though the origin of the fiasco in applying the pluralist politics rests both in the theoretical interpretation and practical application of the dichotomy and/or nexus between democracy and nationalism, this does not necessarily mean that the masses are the sources of the problem. The problem rests in how the masses were mobilized by the political actors. The former were and are captives of homebred and imported '*isms*', which were and are designed to serve the 'zero-sum game politics'. At one time this game divided the Ethiopian society on class bases and at another time on ethnic basis. The dividing, however, remains cosmetic at all times. Why? The answer is, partly and mainly, found in the absence of both the subjective and objective conditions that qualifies the Ethiopian scenario as democratic and politically pluralist society in the real sense of the word. The theoretical basis upon which either socialism or ethnic-

nationalism or democracy are supposed to rest are missing, namely the socio-economic and politico-cultural basis. Subjective condition refers to political culture. Lack of political culture breeds distrust and lack of interpersonal cooperation, a sign characteristic of traditional societies in general. Inglehart (1990:24).

Is the Constitution a fiasco?

The best thing the Ethiopian Constitution has done is to get rid of the fiasco. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in its PREAMBLE, precisely resolves the dichotomy and/or the nexus between ethnic-nationalism and democracy.

We, the Nations Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia:

Strongly committed, in full and free exercise of our right to self-determination, to building a political community founded on the rule of law capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social order;

Firmly convinced that...this objective requires full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights, to live together...;

Further convinced that by continuing to live with our rich and proud cultural legacies in territories we have long inhabited, have, ... built up common interests... and a common outlook;

Fully cognizant that our common destiny can best be served by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting shared interests;

Convinced that to live as one economic community is necessary in order to create sustainable and mutually supportive conditions for ensuring respect for our rights and freedoms and for the collective promotion of our interests;

Determined to consolidate, as a lasting legacy, the peace and the prospect of a democratic order which our struggles and sacrifices have brought about. *Federal Negarit Gazeta* (1995:2).

It is worth noting here that the Constitution, in its Preamble, makes unity in diversity a *sine qua non* referring to phrases like: "...that to live as one economic community is necessary.... for insuring respect for our rights and freedoms and for the collective promotion of our interests." Note also the significance of phrases like: ".... to building a political community founded on.... guaranteeing a democratic order...."; ".... to live together...."; "...with our rich and proud cultural legacies...."; ".... that our common destiny...."; ".... by rectifying historically unjust relationships and by further promoting shared interests".

There is a difference between what the Constitution assigns to resolving the national question within the framework of democracy, rendering the question a pluralist and federal fervent, as opposed to the ethnic nationalism responses of the narrow and chauvinistic origins -origins devoid of democratic element. The dialectics between ethnic nationalism and democracy is permissible, in the Ethiopian context, in as much as political actors respect the principle of *diversity in unity*. Basically, *diversity* in Ethiopia's context connotes group rights and freedoms i.e. ethnic pluralism, and, individual rights and freedoms, provided both do not contravene/infringe upon the democratic system. Hence the political solution is *democratic federalism*; '*in unity*', by addressing individual rights including cultural rights of the group, each group taken as an individual entity, refers to democratic unity, hence *democratic republic*. Consequently, 'federal democratic republic' in the Ethiopian context denotes

democratization of the national question/ethnic-nationalism. In view of this, pluralism is not merely the intercultural co-existence of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. It is an emphasis of the diversity of cultures and of ideas with their attendant institutions and all the differences, contradictions and syncretism of the *federal and democratic* co-existence of the republic called Ethiopia. Now what makes this feasible coexistence marred with fiasco is the fact that the historical evolution that makes a democratic society stable is far from complete in the Ethiopian case⁴. Assefa (2004:4, f18) asks an important question: "Could one state in the Ethiopian case that the constitutional lacunae is deliberate because during the constitutional bargain the forces of diversity prevailed over the forces of unity?"

Unless for its unique application in the Ethiopian case, the forces prevailed in the formation of the federal state, as precisely mentioned in the Preamble are forces of unity that are convinced to live in one 'economic order' (see the Preamble of the Ethiopian Constitution quoted above). The Unique character in the Ethiopian case, as I have argued above is the dialectical inseparability of 'unity *in* diversity' not unity *and* diversity. After all a constitution is a bargain between political forces. As an expression of the highest forms of political will, it is a game political actors play. The game extends not only to influencing the provisions of the constitution, but also to the extent that individuals and groups define themselves by the respective political aims. It was obvious by 1991, even prior to that, with the ascending forces of the national liberation movements, that the ancient unitary regime was not able to sustain itself by forcefully holding a unitary model not because 'all snakes are poisonous'. It was also obvious by then that the undemocratic coming together of ethnic-nationalisms was also not feasible because 'no snakes are poisonous'. It was only through experience that one can know the truth that 'some snakes are poisonous' though the dictates of one's sub-conscious does not trust snakes for the inbuilt assumption that all snakes are poisonous.

The histories of nation building in developed nations justify that they first unfolded their economy on the edifice of which they democratized the superstructure. Neither in the unfolding nor in the 'perfection' of European industrialization can one find emphasis on ethnicity.

Ethnographic considerations have, therefore, played no part in the formation of modern nations. France is Celtic, Iberic and Germanic. Germany is Germanic, Celtic, and Slav. Italy is the country in which ethnography finds its greatest difficulties.... The British Isles, taken as a whole, exhibit a mixture of Celtic and Germanic blood, the proportions of which are difficult to define.

The truth is that no race is pure, and that to base politics on ethnographic analysis is tantamount to basing it on a chimera....

⁴ Assefa (2004:1-4) argues that there is an 'exaggeration', a 'dilemma' and a 'contradiction' in the creation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in 1995, comparing it with previous formations of the federal states elsewhere in the United States of America, Germany, Nigeria and Switzerland etc. Providing some evidence, according to him: "The Preamble, taken together with other provisions of the text, may be considered as evidence to prove the considerable importance that ethnicity and the accommodation of diversity has in contemporary Ethiopian politics. Nevertheless, the federation is incompatible to the states and cantons, for instance, of the United States and Switzerland... In short it is a federation established from a formerly unitary state.... The dilemma in the Constitution, in relation to its origin as well as the combination of ethno-nationalism and self-determination that principally challenges the structure of the state with the possibility of breaking away on the one hand and federalism which on the other hand, tries to accommodate diversity in unity inherently *limiting both forces of unity and diversity*, among other things explains some of the contradictions incorporated in the federal constitution."

The fact of race, therefore, while vitally important at the outset, tends always to become less so. There is an essential difference between human history and zoology. Renan (1882; trans. by Zimmer (1939). Cited in Ebenstein (1960:760-761).

Contrary to the European experience, the relationship between pluralism and the national question stands on its head upside down. The third world dilemma predominantly lies first in the discovery of some ideology; most precisely, in importing it. Only when the ideology seems to suit, then developing nations look for some fixture in the economy. So continues the search for other formulas, which sounds like a *tone of the epoch* - a tone that does not wear but rest out before no one knew it. That explains why the different political groupings and regroupings come and go - a political identity crisis that casts its shade on all levers of societal transformation needed for sustainable development.

A concluding remark: is pluralism feasible?

Political pluralism as a system is the democratization of political institutions, devoid at least of racial and ethnic denotation (not connotation). The fact that Ethiopia is multi-ethnic does not contravene with the application of a pluralist politics in as much as one does not advance the hate/love zero game. In other words, to advance democracy and ethnic politics at one and the same time in a situation where one can be a nationalist without being a democrat and a democrat without being a nationalist is catastrophic. At any rate, the nexus between democracy and 'ethnicism', as rightly put in the above mentioned Preamble of the Constitution, is to engender a political community founded on the rule of law capable of ensuring a lasting peace, guaranteeing a democratic order, and advancing our economic and social order. What matters is the democratization of ethnicism, not the vise-versa, i.e., not the 'ethnicization' of democracy. Ethnic nationalism and democracy uphold two different values. By analogy the relationship between them is like a planet and the sun, say in a given solar system. As a planet is to ethnicity, so is the sun to democracy. A planet is subordinate to a sun.

Inglehart (1990:65) argues that mass democracy is almost impossible without a certain amount of economic development, though the later does not produce democracy. If economic development does not go in tandem with the unfolding of political culture and civic social structures, the result may be not democracy but any of a variety of alternatives short of democracy. The point here is not a choice of alternatives. The alternatives are clear. The choice is more of a choice between democratic options that presuppose the democratization of ethnic-politics. The danger of the option lies in the over doing of the ethnic politics.

If you overdo it, you shut yourself within a prescribed culture, which you regard as a national culture. You are confined and immured, having left the open air of the great world outside to shut yourself up in a conventicle together with your compatriots. Nothing could be worse for the mind; and nothing could be more untoward for civilization... man, apart from being penned up within the bounds of one language or another, apart from being a member of one culture or another, is above all a reasonable moral being. Renan (1882; trans. by Zimmer (1939). Cited in Ebenstein (1960:763).

Political forces, the history of which is identified as dwindling, conflicting and irreconcilable, contribute to the continuation of the fiasco. They should, seriously, engage in a dialogue of resolving differences and start building a viable trust of not incriminating one another.

.... interpersonal trust is... essential to effective political participation in any larger democracy. A sense of trust is also required for the functioning of the democratic rules of the game. One must view the opposition as *loyal* opposition, who will not imprison or execute you if you surrender political power to them, but can be relied upon to govern within the laws, and to surrender political power reciprocally if your side wins the next election..."Almond and Verba (1963) quoted in Inglehart (1990: 23).

For over forty years political forces in Ethiopia have learned and thought how to hatch ideologies in order to use them as weapons. They have to learn and teach how to bury a hatchet. Only then they start to learn how to forgive and how to forget. Only then they replace the fiasco with success -a success glittering in the remote *tukuls*, far from ideologies, but nearer to the earth.

References:

- Archer, S. Margaret. 1988. 'Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory'. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.
- Assefa Fiseha. 2004. 'Theory versus Practice in the Implementation of Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalism.' Draft Paper; Presented at the Seminar on Ethnic Federalism: The Challenges for Ethiopia. 14-16 April 2004. Organized by: The British Council Ethiopia and Addis Ababa University in Collaboration with Ministry of Federal Affairs.
- Connolly, E. William. 1987. 'Pluralism.' In: *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Political Thought*. Oxford. pp. 376-378.
- 1984. *'Dictionary of Philosophy.'* Edited by Frolov, I. Moscow. Progress Publishers.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. 1995. 'The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.' In: *Federal Negarit Gazeta*. 1st Year No. 1, 21st August 1995. Proclamation No.1/1995.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1990. 'Culture shift in Advanced Industrial Society.' Princeton/New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Marx, Karl. 1983. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.' Moscow. Progress Publishers.
- Merera Gudina. 2003. 'Ethiopia: Competing ethnic nationalisms and the quest for democracy.' Addis Ababa: Chamber Printing Press.
- Shaknazarov, Giorgi. 1982. 'Futurology Fiasco. A Critical Study of Non-Marxist Concepts of How Society Develops.' Moscow. Progress Publishers.
- Sparks, Alister. 1996. 'South Africa as a Global Pathfinder in Cultural Pluralism.' In: *The Power of Culture. Conference Report*, 8-9 November 1996, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. pp. 96-103.
- Renan, Ernest. 1882. 'What is a Nation?' trans. by Zimmern, Alfred, Oxford University Press, 1939. 'In: Ebenstein, William. 1960. *Modern Political Thought, The Great Issues*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. New York. pp. 753-767.

Authoritarianism and the Ethiopian Body Politic Dissonance between Democratization and Elite Political subculture

Paulos Milkias¹

The biggest challenge facing Ethiopians today is the introduction of a properly running democracy which has been analyzed by political thinkers stretching from Aristotle during antiquity to Schumpeter in our time. Regrettably, the application of such a system has consistently eluded the country. Despotism which is an antithesis of democracy needs to be explored since it is germane to the society under investigation.

What is Democracy?

The quintessential contention live among political scholars after the electoral debacle of 2005 has been whether or not it is possible to anticipate the emergence of liberal democracy in the Ethiopian social milieu where the ruling elites' political subculture is clearly authoritarian. But before tackling this crucial question, one needs to explain the concept of democracy.

Following the fall of Communist rule in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the American political scientist, Francis Fukuyama, maintained that liberal democracy signalled the "end of history", ironically alluded to in "the mode of production" and "historical materialism" by his ideological nemesis, Karl Marx, more than a century before.² For Fukuyama, Western democracy is 'the final form of government'.³ It is not the author's intention to debate the merits of Fukuyama's 'end of history' hypothesis. However, on the heels of globalization, liberal democracy, at least in name, seems to be spreading to Third World countries like wild fire and we have to acknowledge its apparent significance. With the fall of the Derg, Ethiopia was slated to follow this trend.

Fukuyama's grand design notwithstanding, not all political theorists believe liberal democracy is the best form of governance, though such theorists are currently in a minority. To get a proper grasp of this phenomenon, one needs to go as far back as the fourth century B.C., to the time of Aristotle, who made an empirical study of different governments existing in antiquity. Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC) took up an extensive political science project and categorized governments into distinct classes.⁴ He conceived of governance as one where power is exercised by one person, by a few people, or by many. He explained that in each case, the rule may be conducted properly or improperly. For him, an appropriate rule is undertaken for the common good while an

¹ Paulos Milkias Ph.D. currently teaches Humanities and Political Science at Marianopolis College/Concordia University, in Montreal, Canada. This is a paper to be presented to the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies to be held at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology from July 2 to 6, 2007.

² G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 51

³ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: the Free Press, 1992, xi.

⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, [320 B.C.] translated into English with annotations by Hippocrates, G. Apostle, and Gerson Lloyd, Grinnel: Iowa, the Peripareric Press, 1986

inappropriate rule serves only the private interests of the one, the few, or the many. The common good he had in mind was what is considered right and fitting for the community of people in question. This is because a good community promotes the well-being of all its members by letting them exercise their own potentials so as to lead, what he called “the good life.”

Aristotle conceived of six forms of governance: 1. royalty, where one person rules in the name of the common interest; 2. tyranny, that he considered a deviant form of royalty, where one person rules according to his own private interests; 3. aristocracy - a rule by a narrow clientele in the interest of the few; 4. oligarchy, that he considered a deviant form of aristocracy, characterized as a form of government where most political power effectively rests with a small segment of society typically the most powerful, whether by wealth, military strength, ruthlessness, or political influence; 5. Polity, or the proper rule of the many; and 6., Peoples Government or Democracy, a deviation of a polity. The political philosopher was at that time educationally preparing Alexander the Great for the task; so he toyed with choosing rule by royalty as being the best form of government but soon abandoned it in favour of democracy as 'most tolerable'. It is important to note that he did not give democracy blanket support; rather, he chose it as one that is better than the others that have more shortcomings. His selection of democracy is based on his observation that it is only in such system that more people can profit. Also collective experiences of the many, he thought, is more reliable and would help dampen majority discontent. Winston Churchill's often quoted aphorism “democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried” is therefore not new.⁵

The British social thinker, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who believed in social contract did not want to have anything to do with liberal democracy. In his seminal work, *Leviathan*, he argued that political power should come as the command of the sovereign from the politically superior to the politically inferior. He suggested a relationship in which everything involving human behaviour is derived from the law of nature. Humans, he argued, always want to maximize their own self interest. They are also rational beings. From these premises, Hobbes goes on to construct a provocative argument as to why people would be willing to submit themselves to a sovereign power or political authority in the form of social contract.⁶

Another British philosopher John Locke, though subscribing to the theory of social contract fundamentally disagreed with his countryman. He does accept Hobbes idea of the “State of Nature” but in different vein. His compelling argument was that people ought to be governed in a system of representative democracy.⁷ For him, the individual within a state is justified under certain circumstances to break the contract and revolt against the rulers. This idea enormously influenced American democratic revolutionaries such as Thomas Jefferson.

Then came the French political philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, who critiqued both thinkers. Whereas Hobbes and Locke, building on their theory of social contract, suggested that social freedom is obtained when natural law is obeyed, Rousseau noted that social freedom is superior to the state of nature as a result of which it does not have to obey the latter.⁸ For him, in a state of nature, people are not completely free since

⁵ Winston Churchill, Speech at the House of Commons, Nov. 11, 1947]

⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Hammondsworth, England: Penguin, 1968

⁷ John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.

⁸ Jeanne Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, New York: E.B. Dutton, 1950.

their being dictates their human condition. On the contrary, in a situation of social freedom borne of the general will, reason which forms the latter, dictates the human condition.

Another milestone in this theoretical controversy was reached when the French political thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) analyzed democracy taking the American system as a model which he greatly idolized. For Aristotle, democracy is exercised through the rule of the many whereas for de Tocqueville, it is achieved by the people who exercise self-government. Like Aristotle, de Tocqueville notes that democracy is not perfect. Both concur that democracy expresses the common good. Both also agree that democracies involve people at the base. De Tocqueville, who was a more committed democrat than his Greek counterpart, wrote: "the people reign over the American political world as God reigns over the universe".⁹ This, he argued, became possible because of "equality of condition." By this, he meant to refer to people's access not just to voting or holding public office but also to economic advantages. De Tocqueville, nevertheless, did not hide his fear of the "tyranny of the majority." Whereas for the aristocratic de Tocqueville, whose family suffered during the French revolution, democracy for the masses had to be taken with a grain of salt, for Aristotle who could see the inequities in Athens even during the heyday of Pericles' golden age, democracy, to be virtuous has to promote the interests of the poor and the downtrodden.

The ideas of John Stuart Mill (1806 –1873) emerged in the middle of the 19th century as a continuation of a long line of democratic thinking stretching to the period of the Enlightenment. In two essays, *On Liberty* and *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill formulated the first systematic explanation and defence of liberal democracy.¹⁰ As a democrat, he welcomed the progress in equality referred to by de Tocqueville. He found merit in Tocqueville's warnings about the tyranny of the majority.¹¹ He also agreed with him on the danger of mass culture that might stifle free and informed thought. For him, an omnipotent majority has the capacity to unjustly oppress a minority.

Mill's essays present a sustained effort to integrate democracy and liberalism. It is important to note that his ideas are particularly important for today's nascent democracies. Coming at a time when democracy in England was at its infancy, he airs his concern that suppression of free speech allows for a monopoly of thoughts by the rulers. He echoed qualms common among 19th century liberals that as governments became more centralized and run by self serving elites, they tended to stifle alternative approaches to policy conception, formulation and application. Free speech would become a mere façade, as governments allow token amounts of time for the public to voice concerns but neglects to act upon them. The government of the EPRDF is a good example of this. The solution for Mill is unfettering the exercise of civil liberties to ensure that all views are aired

A more contemporary political thinker of democracy is the Austrian statesman and scholar, Joseph Schumpeter, who published his seminal work, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* in 1942.¹² Schumpeter's conception is a revisionist outlook since he dissented from the analytical frameworks of Aristotle, Locke, Rousseau, and de

⁹ Alexis de Toqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York: Harper and Row, 1969. p. 60.

¹⁰ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991

¹¹ John Stuart Mill, "M. de Toqueville on Democracy in America," in Gereint L. William (ed.) Brighton: Harvester Press, 1976, pp.213-19.

¹² Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

Tocqueville. He argued that people do not govern themselves by an active majority nor by running referenda on every issue. For him, if societies generally called democratic are regarded in terms of how they actually function, it is evident that they are governed not by the people or by a majority taken as a whole but by “elected officials” with an array of non-elected civil servants and independently running political parties. Schumpeter also disagreed with Rousseau that there is such a thing as “the public good” or “general will”. He maintained that the public good is a myth since it is never expressed as the motive of those who vote for public officials, each casting his/her ballot based on private preferences that are sometimes similar and sometimes dissimilar. Schumpeter rejects the classical conceptions of democratic rule. His reductionist concept recognizes democracy as a method of government that involves selecting public officials to provide good governance. He actually defines democracy as an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote”.¹³

If one were to follow Schumpeter's definition, any society that allows free elections is as democratic as any other. Nevertheless, Schumpeter could not escape the temptation of ranking governments according to their capacity to meet the preconditions for successful democratic ideals. The conditions he considers essential are a pool of qualified political elites; pledge that experts and not laymen preside over matters requiring special knowledge and skill, licensed efficient civil servants, and a constituency who believe in and practice tolerance and let politicians a relatively free room in the art of governance. Schumpeter was not afraid to express the view that, all things being equal, a social-democratic system is superior to a capitalist one since it can provide a highly trained public service personnel and is mostly devoid of partisan conflict.

In the recent past, Hanna Pitkin had advanced an interpretation akin to that of Mill in her *Concept of Representation*. For Pitkin, formal notions of representation signify the liaison between those who are representatives and those who are represented. In this classification, Hobbes, is construed as a pure authoritarian theorist since he conceives of governance as a contract between citizens and government leaders empowered to rule as they see fit. In the Hobbesian system, representation is formal, the rule is authoritarian and the rulers have no accountability to the citizens. In the second category, which is more akin to “government of the people, by the people and for the people,”¹⁴ to paraphrase Lincoln, representation is substantive. The representatives stand for the citizens electing them, they act for them, they symbolize them and mirror their views. Whereas genuine liberal democracies around the world fall into the second category, governance in Ethiopia from Haile Selassie, to the Derg to the EPRDF has been clearly Hobbesian. The question is why? This is where the discussion of authoritarianism, democratization and elite political culture becomes crucial.

Authoritarianism and Democratization

The source, goal, obligation, form, scope and limit of governmental control, all of which are rooted in the concept of political authority, have to be understood in any type of political analysis. The nature of the organization of political authority itself derives from theories about the nature of truth as well as the relationship between individuals and groups. For example, belief in one overriding truth leads almost always to an

¹³ Ibid, p. 269).

¹⁴ Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address,” Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1863

authoritarian position. This elitist stand assumes that a small group "knows" and is capable of governing on the basis of certain innate or acquired qualities.

For some, political authority is prescriptive and divine; it is based on inheritance which is construed as a historical mission of governance. This was the case with Emperor Haile Selassie who was instrumental in promulgating the first Ethiopian constitution of 1931. The Negus claimed to have "given" the constitution to his own people "of his own free will." Nevertheless, lest someone miss how far he was willing to go, he did not forget to add: "By virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing which He has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity is inviolable and His Powers indisputable. He is consequently entitled to all the honours due to Him in accordance with tradition and the present Constitution. Any one so bold as to seek to injure the Emperor will be punished".¹⁵ By contrast, for the Ethiopian intelligentsia of the post war years, political authority is Platonic, being based on intellectual achievement – a modern day version of erudite capabilities vested only in highly educated "philosopher kings."

When following the fall of the Derg, democratization suddenly became the buzz word in Ethiopia, the postulate that political authority derives from the will of the people was flaunted. This in turn implied that to allow for participation and open deliberation, political authority needs to be limited. It further suggested the championing of freedom of thought and expression, respect for freedom of association as well as the right to create political parties, and all other organizations needed in a free society. By this, no monopoly of truth is supposed to be conceded to those who govern.

Did the Meles regime that claims to have launched democratization to replace the totalitarian system of the Derg live up to this ideal? The answer is no. For this, we just have to look at their record from 1991 to the present.

There were clear dialectics in the works. The divine right to rule that Haile Selassie had put in place and his modernization of autocracy which was guided by an absolute monarchy was challenged when the clash between an archaic feudal system and a new political culture of modernization brought down the regime.¹⁶

The aftermath of Haile Selassie's overthrow led to the relaxation of the suppression of freedom. Freedom of speech was, for the first time, allowed. Independent journals mushroomed and people exchanged ideas through the print medium. Freedom to organize was tolerated. As a result, between 1973 and 1974, Moslem citizens, factory workers, peasants, students, civil servants and priests staged public demonstrations in support of, or in opposition to, myriads of issues. This was however, short lived since those who filled the vortex following Haile Selassie's fall, exhibited aversion to the new development of popular self-expression.

After the 1974 revolution, the political subculture of junior military officers forming the Derg, which was fundamentally authoritarian, was enshrined. As a result, the leader of the cabal, Mengistu Haile Mariam, smothered the new spirit of freedom in Ethiopia. The civilian intelligentsia that influenced the political line of the military junta also followed Lenin's form of democratic centralism. Thus, traditional autocracy gave way to an ideologically oriented style of authoritarianism.

¹⁵ Government of Ethiopia, *The Imperial Constitution of Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa: Berhanenna Selam, 1931, Article 4.

¹⁶ For an analysis of this phenomenon, see Paulos Milkias, *Haile Selassie, Western Education and Political Revolution in Ethiopia*, Youngstown, New York: Cambria Press, 2006.

During the time of Mengistu, a low level public official in the neighbourhood association known as *Kebele* was empowered to carry out summary executions. This led to the liquidation of hundreds of thousands of citizens mostly school age children. Any person found to be a dissident was herded into overcrowded jails from which he was often taken out for execution. In the countryside, villages were air bombed or torched by troops. People were also forcibly relocated on the mere suspicion of having contacts with the armed opposition.

When a new dialectic faced the Derg and brought down the military regime, a transitional Period charter suggested a clean break from autocratic rule. People talked freely and exchanged ideas unmolested. As Leenco Lata, who was part of the process, points out, at the July 1991 conference, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was to become the guiding principle of the transitional period.¹⁷ The first article of the charter stated: "Based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, ... individual rights shall be respected fully, and without any limitation whatsoever" The rights in question included "freedom of conscience, expression, association and peaceable assembly" as well as "the right to engage in unrestricted political activity and to organize political parties, provided the exercise of such right does not infringe upon the rights of others."¹⁸

The 1994 Federal Constitution also shows strong commitment to human rights. In article 10, it unequivocally states: "Human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of mankind, are inviolable and inalienable." It also adds: "the democratic rights of the citizens shall be respected." But policy declarations and actual practice are two different matters. No sooner than they climbed to power did the political culture of the new elite which was shaped by the ideological pronouncements of Albania's Enver Hoxha steer the system back to authoritarianism.¹⁹ The fundamentals of a democratic system which entail respect for human rights, genuine electoral competition, transparency and accountability were soon systematically smothered.

There is no shortage of proof here. The Ethiopian Human Rights Council, Amnesty International, Africa Watch, and even the European Union Annual Report on Human Rights and U.S. Department of State's human rights report have repeatedly stated violations. They have documented, year after year with names of victims, abduction, torture, extra-judicial killings, and illegal detention of suspected dissidents which had reached staggering proportions in post Derg Ethiopia.²⁰

Ethiopia is not alone in facing this grim reality. At present, a new challenge of tackling the crisis of authoritarianism is sweeping the world. It is bringing into question both the legitimacy and the competence of all manner of authoritarian systems. To date, the crisis has produced a variety of responses. In some cases, there have been successful transitions from autocratic rule toward democracy. In other cases, the legacy of a failure of autocrats have left new regimes with almost insurmountable problems of debt burden and hyperinflation. In still other cases, the authoritarian regimes have genuinely sought to initiate reforms and liberalize their governmental practices. Finally in some cases,

¹⁷ See Leenco Lata, *The Ethiopian state at the crossroads : decolonization and democratization or disintegration?* Lawrenceville, NJ : Red Sea Press, 1999

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Ethiopia, "TPLF and Roots of the 2001 Political Tremor," a paper presented to" the Proceedings of the International Conference on Contemporary Development Issues in Ethiopia," Ethiopian-American Foundation, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich., U.S.A., Aug. 18, 2001

²⁰ See for example Government of the United States, *Ethiopia, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* - 2005, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, March 8, 2006

hardliners have sought to overcome the crisis of transition by increased repression and the adoption of a siege mentality.

The crisis of authoritarianism reached dramatic proportions in Ethiopia during the disputed election of 2005 when millions of Kinijit party supporters shook the world, with the heart-warming spectacle of attracting a rally of the largest number in Ethiopian history - nearly 3 million strong. This was followed by the horrors of an autocratic regime flaunting its power and cutting short the life of at least 193 unarmed demonstrators and then hypocritically pretending that the non-violent demonstrators were a bunch of unemployed "thugs" and "hooligans."²¹

Unfortunately, in going through this horrendous experience, Ethiopia is not alone. The stigma of failure spans the globe and marks all types of tyranny, whether the tyranny is of the one-man or the one-party version. In countries known to be perennially authoritarian, the systems have simply crumbled. Here, one is referring to tin pot dictators armed with guns, traditional autocrats as well as the most advanced ideologically oriented self serving elites. However, tyrannical rule has failed to deliver on its promises of competence in all regions of the world.

In searching for the most promising variables for explaining dynamic change away from this killing and stifling experience, we need to develop a viable theoretical construct. For this, we can start with Robert Dahl's theory of polyarchy, more particularly his seven sets of conditions that are most and least favourable to polyarchy.²² In this exercise, the awareness of failure should teach people like Meles the lesson that leaders are fallible and not omnipotent. They have to acknowledge that it is human to err. They also need to learn that it is thinkable to accept the risks of allowing power to be transferred to others who can then have their turn in making mistakes.

Even though politics engenders divisions it also brings together diverse collectivises. In authoritarian regimes like Ethiopia, there is only a limited form of politics for power struggles among factions. There are clearly discernable disagreements among the rulers, but disagreements among unyielding politicians and bureaucrats are not the same as real politics, which must operate in the context of unfettered open competition. People like Meles need to be told that no one has a monopoly on absolute truth and that there can be no single correct answer to public policy issues serving the nation. A system of governance in Ethiopia should therefore be in the form of polyarchy.

Dahl equates democracy with Polyarchy and suggests that they both represent a system of government that meet three essential conditions:

1. Meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and organised groups (especially political parties) for all effective positions of governmental powers at regular intervals and excluding the use of force.
2. A highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and fair elections.
3. A level of civil and political liberties - freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to form and join organisations - sufficient to ensure the integrity of political participation.²³

²¹ Government of Ethiopia, *Walta Information Centre*, Addis Ababa, November 1, 2005

²² Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1971, pp. 3-20

²³ R. A. Dahl, (2006). *On political equality* New Haven, Yale University Press; Dahl, R. A. (2006). A preface to democratic theory. Chicago, University of Chicago Press; Dahl, R. A. and B. Stinebrickner (2002), *Modern political analysis*,. Upper Saddle River, NJ, Prentice Hall

Dahl emphasises that completeness and openness that he refers to as "increased participation" and "competition" are critical features of such a system. Without availability of political rights and liberties, through which citizens are able to exercise free life, there can be no real democracy. When looking at Dahl's analysis, one can also infer that increased participation facilitates the development of the democratisation process than does the existence of a competition process. After exploring the nature of the democratisation process in many third world countries, Juan Linz, Lira Diamond and S. M. Lipset have classified democracy into three categories: Semi-democratic, Hegemonised and Authoritarian.²⁴

Semi-Democratic systems are those where effective power of elected officials is so limited, or competition among political parties is so restricted, where freedom or fairness of election is so compromised that electoral outcome diverges significantly from popular preferences. In such systems, civil and political liberties are so limited that political groups are unable to organise and express themselves in an effective and vibrant manner, thus impeding the progress of democratisation.

A hegemonised party system is like the one that governed Mexico for over seven decades (Partido Revolucionario Institucional).²⁵ Here, opposition parties are legal but are effectively hindered in their participation in the political process through pervasive electoral malpractices, intimidation and coercion. Sliding down further on the classification scheme, the authoritarian regime permits even less pluralism, as it bans political organisations and competition both of which are necessary conditions for a functioning and successful democracy. The EPRDF rule clearly fits this bill.

Democratization is the new buzzword in political development today and is a new chapter in the transformation of hitherto authoritarian systems. The process has been characterised by Samuel Huntington, as the "third wave". The "third-wave" is for him, a "transition from a non-democratic to democratic regimes".²⁶

For Huntington, the "third-wave of transition" is very complex and involves a number of actors who struggle for the achievement of power and myriads of other goals. He further suggests that, even within the government coalition that controls the engine of change, some groups favour democratisation, others oppose it, and still others want to limit its scope. Despite conflicting objectives, groups exhibit one common aim: to replace the existing authoritarian system. It should be expected that during the process of democratisation, the attitudes and goals of the assemblage in question change. These assemblage also plays an important role in shaping the nature of the democratisation process. To a significant degree, the process of transition to democracy is facilitated when groups favouring pro-democratic form of government are dominant in both the opposition and the government.²⁷ This is clearly not the case in Ethiopia, where the opposition is clamouring to see the growth of democratic practices while the ruling elites are trying their best to curb them.

Dahl emphasises that the differences between the power to reform and oppose shape the scope of democratisation process.²⁸ In addition to the above factors, one major

²⁴ Juan Linz, Lira Diamond, S. M Lipset (eds.), *Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia*, London, Lynne Rienner, 1988, p. xvn.

²⁵ Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics, London: Cambridge University Press, 2006

²⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, "How Countries Democratise", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 106, No.4, 1991-91, p. 579.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Dahl, *Op.Cit*

element to be recognized is the type of transition involved. Transition can be "ideological or organic." Organic transition involves gradual social transformation serving as a "pre-condition" of the political shift from autocracy to democracy.²⁹ The United Kingdom and the USA are classic cases of this model since their shift in systems involved gradual transformation. It is important to bear in mind that, as suggested by Locke, both the British and the American transformations were based not on the idea of a political revolution. Rather, they arose from the need to protect rights and liberties from autocratic regimes.³⁰ It is important to point out that Locke's ideas were already widely accepted by the citizens of both countries and were generally enjoyed even without being promulgated in constitutional form.

The tradition of a predominantly "ideological transition" began with the French Revolution of 1789.³¹ As one scholar argues: "those who stormed the Bastille were not inspired by the desire to protect anything that they already had; rather, they wanted to destroy the old and build a new one."³² He then adds: "this new world existed only in [in their] imagination, and was based on general ideas and principles, [of their] revolutionary project."³³

The process of democratization, whether genuine or imagined, was initiated in Ethiopia when the EPRDF came to power. The new rulers were obviously expected to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the people, which was to a large extent, to smoothen the process of transition. The successes of democracy therefore depended to a large extent, on the capability and willingness of the EPRDF political elites to carry out the transitional process from autocratic to a democratic one. On this score, however, the elites have failed miserably.

It is interesting to see what leads to the breakdown of authoritarianism and the mechanism and process through which democratisation starts in transitional countries. In their study of this process, D. Potter, D. Goldblatt, M. Kiloh and P. Lewis outline three variables. One is "Modernisation", which lays down economic prerequisites for democracy. The other is "Structural", which focussed on the effect of authoritarianism on changes in class and power. The third is what they refer to as "Transitional", which emphasises bargaining between elites to negotiate the shift to democracy in order to facilitate the process of a systemic change.³⁴

Transition from above can smoothen the progress of democratisation whereas revolution from below may overthrow an authoritarian regime but is not capable of

²⁹ Ghia Nodia, "How Different are post-Communist Transitions", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 7, No.2, 1996, pp. 18-21.

³⁰ G.Faiella, (2006). *John Locke : champion of modern democracy*. New York, N.Y., Rosen Pub. Group; See also G. A. J.Rogers, (1994). *Locke's philosophy : content and context*. Oxford, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1977; *Locke on human understanding: selected essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

³¹ Melancon, M. S. and J. C. Swanson (2007). *Nineteenth century Europe : sources and perspectives from history*. New York, Pearson/Longman; Anderson, J. M. (2007). *Daily life during the French Revolution*. Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press; Clark, H. C. (2007). *Compass of society : commerce and absolutism in old-regime France*. Lanham, Lexington Books; McPhee, P. (2007). *Living the French Revolution, 1789-1799*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan; Kates, G. (2006). *The French Revolution : recent debates and new controversies*. New York ; London, Routledge; Campbell, P. R. (2006). *The origins of the French Revolution*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan; Brown, H. G. (2006). *Ending the French Revolution : violence, justice, and repression from the terror to Napoleon*. Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press; Buckley, M. S. (2006). *Tragedy walks the streets : the French Revolution in the making of modern drama*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press.

³² Ghia Op. Cit.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ B.C.Smith, *Understanding Third World Politics: Theories of Political Change and Development*, (second edition), New York, Palgrave, McMillan, 2003, pp.252-253.

sustaining democratisation. As observed in many Latin American countries, democratisation may signify “pacts” between the rulers and the opposition which provide protection for vested interests such as between the ruling actors and civil society groups including unions.³⁵ It has been observed in several cases that mass participation and popular mobilisation can harm the prospect of establishing democratization since it tends to intimidate those precariously hanging on to power. Whether or not that was the case in the 2005 political derailment is something to be investigated in the future.

Democracy becomes an accepted phenomenon when no social and political group poses a challenge and attempts to overthrow the democratic regime or the existing government even when facing severe political and economic calamity. This is when the citizens and the opposition come to believe that any change in governance can be achieved through constitutional procedures and peaceful debate within the organ of the state itself. In other words, under ideal conditions of democratization, all problems are capable of being tackled through established norms and procedures. This, was never the case Ethiopia.

To achieve the consolidation of democracy, certain preconditions have to be met. Before everything else, a viable state must exist. In Ethiopia where statehood has never been questioned, such a problem cannot arise. But in a county like Somalia, where conflicts about the authority and domain of politics and the identities and loyalties of the people are highly fragmented, no state in real form exists and there can be no democracy. Here, anarchy is to prevail until a successful state formation is achieved. By the same token, if free, fair and reliable elections cannot be held, if winners cannot claim or exercise the use of legitimate executive force, and the inhabitants of the country cannot effectively have their rights safeguarded by the rule of law, there can be no democracy. This is clearly the norm in Ethiopia.

A liberal popular government cannot be established until the process of democratic transition has been finalized. For this to happen, there is a necessary condition. Free and contested elections based on broadly inclusive voter eligibility have to take place. But it would be wrong to assume that such elections are sufficient to complete a democratic transition because in many cases where so called free and contested elections are held, the party winning the election might lack de-facto control. When Kinijit gained an upper hand in the last election, such that the European observer group had decided to announce its victory based on observed ballots, the success could not be translated into the transfer of political power. Executive, legislative and judicial prerogatives were unleashed with interlocking set of reserve domains. The army and the police were ruthlessly employed to derail the success. Thus, in the 2005 general election, the incumbent regime opted out of playing by the rules of the democratic game, arrested and jailed the opposition group and accused them on bogus charges - all to hang on to power.³⁶

Meles claims that his EPRDF shall be remembered in history for introducing democracy to Ethiopia. But a regime should never be considered democratic unless its rulers abide by the accepted rules of the game and relinquish power when defeated. In a situation in which elected executives no matter the magnitude of their majority, infringe

³⁵ Samuel Huntington Samuel Huntington, "Will More Countries become Democratic?", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.99, No.2, 1989; M. Weiner,

³⁶ Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Ethiopian Election of 2005: A Bombshell & Turning Point?" *Review of African Political Economy*, Vol. 32 No. 104/5, (Jun/Sep 2005), pp466-473

on the wellbeing of people, take away the rights of individual citizens, fail to protect oppressed ethnic groups and minorities, or when they impede the legitimate function of the three organs of the state – namely the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, as the EPRDF have done repeatedly, they are not keeping themselves within the bounds of the rule of law. Indeed, such regimes can never be construed as democratic.

All this does not mean that the opposition bears no responsibility for the failure of democracy. Larry Diamond has pinpointed three paradoxes of democracy, which present challenge to countries embarking upon the path of democratisation. He calls attention first to the looming tension between "conflict and consensus". According to him, for a democracy to be successful competition between the ruling group and the opposition as well as among the latter, must be conducted only within carefully defined and universally accepted norms. Furthermore, "cleavage must be tempered by consensus."³⁷ Whether these were present or absent in the 2005 election is a subject that needs to be looked at.

A second strain that threatens the democratization process is what Diamond refers to as "representativeness against governability".³⁸ Government should normally respond to the needs of an assortment of groups inside the state. It should arbitrate fairly whenever hostilities surface. But for arbitration to take place, a highly stable party structures have to exist. It is only well structured viable parties that have the ability to reconcile the differences of various groups as well as give effective governance to a polity. Parties must also rise above the occasion, leave narrower sectional interests and be ready to compete fairly and govern diverse sections of the society if called upon. This is perhaps one weakness that Ethiopian parties exhibit at the moment. That the Diaspora Kinijit party is itself divided into factions fighting for dominance while their leaders languish in Kalliti jail, does not auger well for a healthy political transformation in building democracy.

The third paradox, of the democratization process is the dialectics that come into play between "Consent and Effectiveness". In order to be operationally successful, a democracy should be able to garner the consent of the citizens. This should be propped up by a deep rooted moral obligation and emotional loyalty of the populous. Whereas in this compact, the citizens of Ethiopia who stood for hours to vote for their preferred candidates have kept their part of the bargain, the EPRDF had miserably failed.

Indeed, the paradoxes of democratization require the genuine commitment of political actors steering countries in transition from authoritarianism. If they fail to pay attention to such problems and allow contradictions to run rampant, they would never be able to smoothly facilitate the transition of their country towards a democratic polity.

Many political pundits have recently observed that although institutional structures of governance seem to be in place in countries like Ethiopia, it has dismally failed to fulfil the basic desires of the citizens. This had led to the notion of a failed democratic practice looming on the horizon. The shortcomings that have slowly and steadily crept into the system impede the capacity of the political structure to operate properly. Scholars now call this the syndrome of "democratic deficit" and recognize it at several levels of governance.

³⁷ Larry Diamond, "Three Paradoxes of Democracy", in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, (eds.), *The Global Resurgences of Democracy*, Maryland, The John Hopkins University Press, 1996, p.112.

³⁸ Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, Boston, Little Brown, 1965, pp.356-360.

First, it is clear that for a system to be recognized as democratic, it has to allow the inhabitants to enjoy equal rights and privileges as citizens. If constitutional and legal guarantees fail to fulfil the promises enshrined in them, democracy is totally meaningless. This is clearly the case in Ethiopia. Take just one example. This author who resides in Canada has observed to his horror, the government of Ethiopia renews citizenship passports for members of the Tigray Development Agency from where the ruling elite, the TPLF hail, without asking any questions. It also did the same for Eritrean citizens before the 1998-2000 border war. This allowed both groups to hold dual passports if they wished to. But when other Ethiopian citizens who have stayed in Canada for more than four years went to ask for passport renewal, they were sent to the Canadian Foreign ministry to bring a letter testifying that they have not been granted Canadian citizenship which would bar them from holding dual nationality. Interestingly, the law neither bars nor explicitly allows dual citizenship. That is why even high level EPRDF officials admit to having dual citizenship. The law was kept in this manner to use it as a political tool – to harass Ethiopians from other ethnic enclaves called kilils and reward those from Tigray who demonstrate unflagging loyalty to the regime. The author had asked, Mr. Wahde Belay, former counsellor in the Ethiopian embassy in Ottawa, why Ethiopian citizens were not treated equally. His reply was that there were strict orders from higher authorities to this effect.³⁹ Since the TPLF system fails to allow the inhabitants of Ethiopia to enjoy equal rights and privileges as citizens, it is therefore far from being democratic. The TPLF government also happens to be the only government in the history of the world to officially treat its citizens differently on the basis of ethnicity and even grant passports to non-citizens while denying it to legitimate nationals.

Second, democratic deficit can appear through procedural shortcomings such as a flawed voting system. In a situation where civil society is feeble or fragmented, the power of the dominant group would prevail and constrain the emergence of a working democracy. That in the 2005 election, the EPRDF admitted losing in the urban areas where foreign observers were present but then claimed winning in the rural areas of the country, is related to this phenomenon. Intimidation, vote rigging, even violence was used to elicit the result. As a precaution, a partisan electoral board was put in place to legitimate the false claims of victory by EPRDF candidates.

Third, democratic deficit emerges in systems where powerful, despotic executive dominates all branches of government, namely the legislature, the executive and the judiciary. Lack of effective checks and balances on governmental authority, widespread corruption, do clearly hinder the success of the democratisation process. The fact that the head of the ruling party, Mr. Meles Zenawi had wilfully expelled 12 central committee members of the TPLF and then jailed them on corruption charges is a common occurrence in Ethiopia. When one of these officials, the former Minister of Defence, Siye Abraha was cleared by the courts and set free, the Prime Minister sent police officers to arrest him and return him back to jail before he even reached his home. This is just one small example of why there is no separation of powers as the EPRDF claims.

Fourth, democratization may be affected seriously or even be halted when the government of a country and international institutions fail to alleviate national or

³⁹ For the details of the interview, see Paulos Milkias, "the Ethiopian-Eritrean War (1998-2000) - Causes and Consequences," *Horn of Africa Journal*, Rutgers University, Vol. xvii, no. 4. October 2000, PP. 33-71.

regional problems. If there is endless war, or endemic famine and pestilence, democracy can never flourish in the society.⁴⁰ This again is the case in Ethiopia which has gone from war to war during the last 40 years. That the U.S. which considers the present regime as an ally against the spread of terrorism in the Horn of Africa has chosen to look the other way even though it knows the bellicose nature of the Meles group, has clearly hindered the process of democratization as well as the alleviation of poverty. That the 1998-2000 war with Eritrea and the recent invasion of Somalia by the Meles army has consumed billions of dollars of money that could have been used for economic and political development is very clear.

There are certain institutional measures that should be taken in order to strengthen any nascent democratization process. Popular participation either directly or through election should be insured. The slow emergence of tyranny that usually follows democratization in societies that were hitherto autocratic, should be vigilantly watched and checked. The promotion of open competition for power which is based on fair elections need to be guaranteed. To help these measures succeed, a forum should always be provided for rational discussion of political problems as well as the reconciliation of conflicting interests.⁴¹ Since the ruling TPLF-EPRDF regime has banned the fledgling free press, jailed opposition leaders and independent journalists and used censorship to close down blogs it considers unfriendly, it is never possible to cultivate democracy in Meles ruled Ethiopia.

One major hurdle Third World countries such as Ethiopia have to pass, in an attempt to democratize and develop, is the ability to forge unity through agreement among ethnic groups with different interests, and reaching consensus during the decision process. Multi-ethnic states like Ethiopia have much greater need to develop properly functioning governance than other polities. They have to try to avoid the emergence of systems that tend to gravitate towards majority dominance or the adoption of formulas of plebiscite to marginalize minorities. Regional federalism can, of course, help where strong different regional groups exist side by side. For their success, state and civil societies will have to allow the flourishing of institutions responsible for political socialisation. The employment of multi-lingual media, school curricula that recognize different languages, a symbolic recognition of cultural diversity and an array of legal codes as well as habits of political tolerance and forbearance for parties representing different entities would broaden the magnitude of the democratic system. Furthermore, proportional representation instead of the large single member districts with "first past the post elections" can increase representation by minorities in the political process and thus contribute to national unity. Only in this regard did the EPRDF come nearer to smoothening democratization though its emphasis on ethnic differences rather than similarities and consensus has exacerbated the division to such an extent that if the present policy continues into the indefinite future, the country may simply implode.

Granted, by its very nature, competitive electoral politics in multi-ethnic society does gravitate towards nationalistic, ethnocentric and regional predispositions. This was observed by social thinkers a long ago as the 19th century. For example the well-known utilitarian philosopher, John Stuart Mill had provided a very dismal image of representative democracy in multi-ethnic polity. He wrote:

⁴⁰ Robin Luckham, Anne Marie Goetz and Mary Kalder, "Meaning and Model of Democracy" in Robin Luckham and Sunil Bastian, *Can Democracy be Designed*, London, New York, Zed Books 2003, pp.24-25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

If there is no fellow feeling among various sections of society and if they speak different languages, then a cohesive public opinion necessary to the working of representative democracy is next to impossible.⁴²

In this regard, the author totally disagrees with Mill. Societies can be multi-ethnic and at the same time be democratic. Sure, multi-ethnic states do have more problems than heterogeneous societies. Many such states that started their governance with a democratic system have even collapsed before maturing. Somalia, that has been ruled by anarchy since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991, is a good example here. The Somalis, though of one ethnicity and one religion (Islam) have been hopelessly divided on the basis of clans and have failed to sustain a democratic system that was put in place at the time of independence in 1960. But then, on the other hand, the largest democracy in the world, India, has more than 2,000 ethnic groups and has functioned almost flawlessly since 1947.⁴³

The well known contemporary political scientist, Lucian Pye asserts that the underlying problem countries in the Third World face in their quest for democratisation is that their political behaviour is strongly coloured by consideration of "communal identifications" which hinders the realization of a consensus on a national scale.⁴⁴ Arend Lijphart also suggests that the newly independent countries of the Third World are facing deep divisions within their societies due to differences in custom, religion and language. To meet the challenge of political dysfunction, they have to take stock of the above and then strive to forge a strong, unified structure of governance. He also points out that one major reason for the collapse of democracies in the newly independent countries is the direct connection between two underlying features of non-Western political processes, namely a "pluralist society" entrusted to a weak and "inept" democratic government.⁴⁵

For facilitating democratisation in a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society, Lipjart has suggested that the following steps be taken. There is a need to build a grand coalition of different segments of the society. This may mean a grand coalition cabinet in a parliamentary system or a "grand council" or committee with advisory functions. A mechanism should be created to evolve a system whose important feature is the adoption of a "multiple veto system" that serves as a protection of crucial minority interests. Various groups in the society ought to be given equal opportunities in the decision making process. And last but not least, a high degree of internal autonomy should be granted to each section within a society.⁴⁶ Future governments of Ethiopia need to pay close attention to this caveat.

When a society is in transition, there are opportunities for evolving multifarious forms of democracy. The charismatic nature of political elites or the pragmatic need of maintaining a pluralistic character leading to the consolidation of democracy will lead to this phenomenon. For a good example, one has only to look at the types of democracies

⁴² John Stuart Mill, "Consideration, *Consideration on Representative Government*, New York, Liberal Art Press, 1958, p.230

⁴³ Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, New York: HarperCollins, 2007.

⁴⁴ Lucien W. Pye, "The Non-Western Political Process", *Journal of Politics*, Vol.20, No.3, August, 1958

⁴⁵ Arendt Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration*, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1989, pp.16-17.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

that have been established in Switzerland and India. Both have multi-cultural societies but have a properly functioning democracy adopted to their specific conditions.⁴⁷

A holistic evaluation of the democratisation process that is currently going on in many countries around the world cannot be complete without reference to the effect of political culture. Indeed, for democratization to be sustained, a proper elite political culture ought to evolve. Careful examination shows remarkable dissimilarities between the experience of many states. Whereas some countries have succeeded in sustaining the democratisation process, others have failed miserably. Take India and Pakistan. Both started democratization at their independence in 1947. In India, democracy has attained maturity and is flourishing.⁴⁸ But in Pakistan, it has failed and the country is currently being ruled by an authoritarian military junta.⁴⁹ Arguably, a working liberal governance was achieved in India through the development of a democratically oriented elite political culture that Indian leaders from Nehru to Sing have espoused.

Political Culture and Political Elites

Political culture and political socialization are important in sustaining democracy and need explanation at this juncture. It is a known fact that each society sets its own standards of personal values. It has its unique cultural concepts regarding the way the political system is perceived, the manner in which citizens' complaints are handled by political actors, the venues open to exercise individual, group and social rights as well as commitment to fulfilling personal and shared obligations. The symbols and mores related to this phenomenon form the political culture of a nation.

Political culture is shaped by history, economics, religion and tradition. It is a phenomenon typical of a particular set - a well-defined constellation of people identifying one another as members of a group. Such a cluster shares through descent or high levels of interaction, a set of symbolic practices in the areas of language, religion, artistic forms and rituals. But in this, there are considerable variations within nations and without.

Political culture is not transitory since it is passed on from generation to generation. A Political culture can essentially be understood as a collective political memory. This notion becomes clear when different countries are compared. In the U.S., for example, there is strong attachment to competitive individualism. In France there is emphasis on egalitarianism and in Britain an almost religious devotion to seals, symbols and institutions.

Political cultures do become amorphous when society's experience change. Thus, if cultural values turn out to be radically inconsistent with social reality, individuals who are part of that culture will acquire an incentive for altering the original belief system by which they were guided. This was what happened when the feudal regime of Haile

⁴⁷ G. A. Fossedal, (2002). *Direct democracy in Switzerland*, . New Brunswick, N.J., Transaction Publishers; C. P. Bhambhri, (2003). *Hindutva : a challenge to multi-cultural democracy*,. Delhi, Shipra Publications;

⁴⁸ Roy, R. and P. Wallace (2007). *India's 2004 elections : grass-roots and national perspectives*. New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks, Calif., Sage Publications; Chaube, S. K. (2006). *Parliamentary democracy in India : government and opposition*. Kolkata, K. P. Bagchi & Co

⁴⁹ Babar, F. and Shaheed Bhutto Foundation. (2007). *How elections are rigged in Pakistan*. [Peshawar], Shaheed Bhutto Foundation; Ahmad, N. (2004). *Political parties in Pakistan : a long way ahead*. Islamabad, The Network Publications; Beg, M. A. A. (1998). *Democracy displaced in Pakistan : case history of disasters of social pollution*. Karachi, Research & Development Publications; Ikram, A. (2003). *Democracy in Pakistan : praetorian puppeting*. Islamabad, The PFI and Margalla Voices; Okahan. (2004). *Political parties in Pakistan, disabled by design*. Islamabad, Freedom Publishers.

Selassie introduced modernization and inadvertently unleashed an unbridled American cultural influence in the mid 1900's.⁵⁰

It was the famous German social thinker, Max Weber's who wrote in his seminal work, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, (translated and published in English in 1958), who stated: "culture, attitude, values and beliefs" play a key role in sustaining or weakening national progress.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the credit for advancing a clear cut concept of political culture goes to Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba. In their ground-breaking work, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitude and Democracy in Five Nations*, published in 1963, they collected data from five countries and analysed the factors responsible for the development of a stable political system. In great detail, the two authors highlighted various types of political culture and sub-culture; they examined broad features of a "civic culture" which they pointed out plays a crucial role in sustaining a properly functioning democratic political system.⁵²

Almond and Verba did the pioneering study of cross-national differences in political beliefs, symbols, and values. The researchers interviewed about 1,000 people each in five countries, in 1959 and 1960, in order to measure national political attitudes. They then discerned three general political cultures: participant, subject, and parochial that exist in all societies but in a different mix.

Participants

These are found in political cultures, such as the United States and Britain. They refer to people who understand that they are citizens with rights and therefore pay attention to politics. They take pride in their country's political system and are willing to discuss its merits and demerits. They believe that they can influence politics on a national and local level. They know that they can organize a group to protest if they observe something which they consider unjust. Consequently, they exhibit a high degree of political competence and political efficacy. They take pride in voting and believe people should participate in the political process. They are active in communal work and more often than not, belong to voluntary organizations. They show trust in other people. They remember participating in family discussions regarding politics and other issues as they were growing up. For Almond and Verba, participant political culture is the most ideal form in sustaining democracy. Needless to say, such individuals are rare in Ethiopia.

Subject

This category puts some citizens a little below the participant political culture. It is one that the authors said was prevalent in Germany and Italy. People categorized as subjects do understand their rights as citizens. They do pay attention to politics, but in a more passive manner. Though they follow political news, they are not proud of their country's political system. They do not exhibit a strong emotional commitment toward their government. They are not uncomfortable in discussing politics. But their influence on politics, they believe, is limited to a large extent in speaking with local officials. They do not, under normal circumstances, try to organize a group when they want something

⁵⁰ "The Political Spectrum of Western Education In Ethiopia", *Journal of African Studies*, vol. ix, No.1, Spring, 1982, PP. 22-29

⁵¹ Swatos, W. H. and L. Kaelber (2005). *The Protestant ethic turns 100 : essays on the centenary of the Weber thesis*. Boulder, Paradigm Publishers; Weber, M., P. Baehr, et al. (2002). *The Protestant ethic and the "spirit" of capitalism and other writings*. New York, Penguin Books.

⁵² Gabriel Almond 31-32 Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitude and Democracy in Five Nations*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp.31-32.

to be done by the state. The political competence and efficacy of a subject person is lower than that of the participant. Many feel powerless. They do vote, but without much enthusiasm. They are less likely to trust others. They rarely raise their voice to express views as children. When there are many with such a condition and frame of mind, democracy has difficulty sinking roots. Subjects are people who are used to thinking of themselves as obedient individuals rather than as active participants in their country's political process. There are significant numbers of subject individuals in Ethiopia.

Parochial

Still, a rank lower than subject is the parochial political culture, mostly observed in Almond and Verba's study of Mexican society. Here, large numbers of the citizens do not much care that they are citizens of a particular nation. Their main identity is connected with what happens in their locality. They exhibit no pride in their country's political system and expect little from the politicians. They do not care about politics and have very little knowledge of it. In fact, they do not show a desire to have the ability to participate in politics. Parochials have no sense of political competence or efficacy and feel totally alienated from the institutions in place. Almond and Verba stress that attempting to evolve a working and genuine democracy in a parochial political culture is near impossible since the system requires new institutions and new sense of citizenship. This phenomenon is widespread in the rural areas and particularly in the southern provinces of Ethiopia where people feel helpless in the face of intimidation and denial of rights meted out by Kebele officials and security personnel.

Civic Culture

A civic culture is one where the three tendencies described above are mixed without one dominating the other two. Almond and Verba's study suggested that the Anglo Saxon democracies are a good example of a civil culture because they have the following essential elements. They have a society that exhibits fidelity, balanced structure and high political participation level. Though individuals do become participants in the political process, they do not forgo their orientation as "subject" or "parochial." In fact, the three tendencies coexist and it is the concurrence of the subject and the parochial attitude and their fusion with the participant orientation that provides a balanced culture in which political activity, involvement and rationality exist but are well-adjusted by passive participation, tradition and commitment to parochial values.

Elite Political Subculture

Since historically, most changes have been spawned by intellectuals, it is important to discuss elites and elite political subculture. People like Mengistu Haile Mariam, had used all kinds of intrigues and decimated their opponents - the intellectuals who started to roll the ball of Ethiopia's political revolution in the mid 1900's. In the Bolshevik revolution, it was Lenin, Trotsky and their intellectual colleagues who spearheaded the 1917 political upheaval. In the American revolution, it was the intellectual writings of people like Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson that became a beacon of the country's political transformation. The French revolution of 1789 was ignited by an exceptional body of literary product churned out from all over France by a new school of intellectuals known as the *Encyclopaedists* and was spearheaded by the 12 member intellectual group: "*le Comité de Salut public*". The latter came from

different classes; they had different professions, careers and lifestyles. The only thing they shared was a common intellectual horizon.

Intellectuals are unique in that they are not beholden to special interest, social status or class. Since they lie between and above them they have more freedom to disparage others and project specific aspirations. They are adept at using the word, written or spoken. They can write their ideas and disseminate them among the populous. They can use the radio, the newspaper, and TV and the Internet better than others. Intellectuals criticize and manage to elevate their criticism to new ideological heights that transcend the existing formulations. In the same way that inventors or talented managers renovate the state of the art in a trade or industry, intellectuals attempt to renovate society, its life, and its values, but with a far wider impact.

Intellectuals influence people's views profoundly and reshape their outlooks and conceptions. They are not a coherent group with common ideas, like a political party. They usually, do not dominate the society because their messages are sometimes vehemently resisted by those to whom they are addressed. After all, people are wary of new things that affect their lives and do not easily give in to change. Furthermore, the intellectuals are constantly at odds with one another. That was for example the case with those who spearheaded the 1974 Ethiopian revolution only to have it snatched away by the Derg military junta.

In all cases, it is the function of the intellectuals to stir up people's thinking and ideas about the world. Following in the footsteps of Socrates who told the Athenians: "I am the gadfly that God has attached to the state all day long and in all places", they feel committed to a messianic mission. In other words, they are a thorn in the flesh of every established order and every prevailing ideology.

Because of constant fissures which is the hallmark of political elites, they misleadingly look harmless. However, when some among them begin to spin new ideas and a common set of beliefs geared to a distant goal, they shake the establishment at its seams. In this process, they become organic intellectuals, assembling and synthesizing existing beliefs, suggesting, compromising or rejecting ideas and ultimately forging a viable group.

No matter the devastation that might follow their novel approaches to shaping political life, intellectuals perform a critical and innovative roles that societies need. They criticize the old and constantly open up new horizons of thought and social endeavours that may be beneficial in the long run. The Ethiopian intelligentsia that triggered the fall of feudal regime in 1974 had been castigated for opening the door to the red terror and the ethnic fragmentation that is facing the country today; but regardless of the unanticipated result, the goal was noble. It was to stamp out an anachronistic system of governance and empowering the people. If the revolution they championed brought about devastation and fragmentation, it was unintended. If a person brings a flower of greetings to a visiting aunt and the latter suffered an asthma attack, harm was not intended. But one thing is clear. Even though the people have not been empowered yet, the demise of feudalism is the greatest gain of twentieth century Ethiopia.

Many scholars have provided different interpretations to the relationship between elite political culture and democratisation. For Larry Diamond political culture interacts with the democratisation process at different levels: particularly at an elite and societal levels. At the micro level, political elites arrive at a consensus that democracy is good and should be striven for. Then at the macro level, democratisation can be stimulated

through the revitalisation of dormant cultural beliefs and values expressed by civil society and other autonomous groups that usually trigger the collapse of authoritarian regimes through such actions as strikes and peaceful demonstrations.

One key aspect that needs to be acknowledged is the key role played by a mechanism of transmitting political culture from one generation to another. It is clear that political culture is, to a large extent, static. But its core values are transmitted from generation to generation through political socialization. This refers to a process by which people learn the values and norms of their society. It is a direct and indirect mechanism by which a specific political culture is transmitted from one generation to the other. Agents of Socialization conducted mostly during a person's upbringing are the family, the school system, peer groups and the Media.⁵³

Stressing the importance of political socialisation process in political culture, the American political scientist, Lucian W. Pye points out:

The concept of political culture assumes that each individual must, in his own historical context, learn and incorporate into his personality the knowledge and feelings about the politics of his people and community. Each generation must receive its politics from the previous one, each must react to find his own politics and the total process must follow the laws that govern the development of individual personality and the general culture of a society...[The process of] political socialization not only involves the deeply instilled attitudes and sentiments of early childhood and family life but also the later experience of explicit instruction on politics at school, through exposure to the mass media and in contact with other political socializing agents.⁵⁴

Another important ingredient of political culture, as Almond and Verba point out, concerns attitude towards authority which can significantly affect democratic stability or instability. Alex Inkel argues that faith in powerful leaders, xenophobia, lack of confidence towards each other have all the hallmarks of authoritarian political culture. On the other hand, adaptability, confidence, dispassion, approval of others' and outlook towards authority that is non-submissive and reconcilable, are important elements of democratic political culture. There are indications that though Ethiopia cannot be construed as having a homogenous political culture, the society in general falls into the first category than the second. But one can certainly say that, that is clearly the case in Ethiopia's elite political subculture; a key reason why those who subvert democracy have thrived regime after regime.

Lucian W. Pye traces the roots of authoritarianism to a country's political culture. He writes:

Distaste for open criticism of authority, fear of upsetting the unity of the community and knowledge that any violation of the community's rule of property will lead to ostracism, all combine to limit the appeal of Western democracy. As a result, the development of more open and enlightened politics ...[in Third world

⁵³ David Easton, and Jack Dennis. 1969. "A political theory of political socialization." In David Easton and Jack Dennis, *Children in the Political System*, New York: McGraw Hill, 47-70; Pamela Conover, Johnston, and Donald D. Searing. 1994. "Democracy, Citizenship and the Study of Political Socialization." In Ian Budge and David McKay, eds., *Developing Democracy*. London: Sage, 24-55. London: Sage; Shrikant Dash, and Richard G. Niemi. 1992. "Democratic attitudes in multicultural settings: A cross-national assessment of political socialization." *Youth & Society* 23 (March): 313-34; R. Dawson, Kenneth Prewitt, and K. Dawson. 1977. *Political Socialization*. 2d edition. Boston: Little Brown.

⁵⁴ Lucien W. Pye 21 Lucian W. Pye, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimension of Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985, p.21

countries] is unlikely to produce [democratically] oriented form of popular participation in public life. At best, it is likely to be a form of popular participation ... which is blended with much that Westerners regard as authoritarianism.⁵⁵

Pye does not leave the explanation there. He warns that:

...[Third World] prospects for modernisation with or without democracy rest very much upon the potential inherent in paternalistic power. Yet the risks are also great, because whenever paternalistic power falters, there can be strong emotional reactions on the part of dependent followers and the general public. The result can be cynicism and a privatising interest. At worst, there can be explosions of rage against failed authority.⁵⁶

The experience in democratisation of some developing countries has shown that successful transition from authoritarianism to democracy has expired only in societies where efforts were made by the political elite to spread the positive values of democratisation among the populous thus engendering a sense of cooperative activity among the citizens of the political system. Simply introducing the norms and values of democracy cannot be of much help. Indeed, one has to first evaluate the political culture and subculture of the governing elites and the society in question before embarking upon it. Western donors that have already allocated billions to help Meles carry out what he misleadingly parades as “democratization” should take stock of this.

The key test of democratization involve the degree to which citizens enjoy the right to organize civic groups, work for political parties, protest or vote at intervals. Until the 1970's, Ethiopians had no experience of political parties which are essential engines of elections. Democratization also involves how much civil rights are proffered to proponents of unpopular causes. All these are clearly absent in TPLF ruled Ethiopia since Ethiopia's elite culture, which is authoritarian, is based on one-man/one-party governance. The inadequacies of the constitutional framework to address these problems, and the unwillingness of the elites to appreciate the need to disentangle the country from this undemocratic web, has now left the country in limbo.

To redress the entrenchment of one-party rule and a marginalized opposition in Ethiopia, one needs a political discourse and ultimately an elite political culture that facilitates shared democratic values. A caveat that can be suggested in fulfilling this promise is that all progressive forces who are committed to the liberal way of life be in a position to launch a public campaign through the media, political parties, trade unions, progressive schools, colleges and universities, women's associations and other civil society organizations. However, the author points to a warning flag lest people think this is easily realizable. Political discourse and political socialization aimed at cultivating a democratic value system is next to impossible because the Ethiopia media is now effectively monopolized by the EPRDF, foreign based radio stations and Internet blogs have been jammed, viable political parties have been marginalized with their leaders goaled and civil society organizations have been effectively silenced following the salvo of electoral strife that expired in 2005, leaving enormous political shockwaves in its wake.

Meles has never been a democrat. In fact, he had always talked not of introducing democracy but rather, “revolutionary democracy.”⁵⁷ He has flouted the rules of

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Lucien Pye, 341

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ "The Great Purge and Ideological Paradox in Contemporary Ethiopian Politics," *Horn of Africa*

democratic competition right from the time he took over power from the Derg's strongman, Mengistu Haile Mariam. Thanks to Mr. Meles, the country has actually won the dubious title of hosting the largest prison house of journalists in Africa. Earlier, in 1993, the Prime Minister invited opposition party members from the Diaspora to come to Addis Ababa to attend a Peace and Reconciliation Conference only to arrest them on arrival at the capital's airport. That was the fate of the former leader of the Oromo Liberation Front, (OLF) Leenco Lata and a prominent member of the opposition party, Coalition of Ethiopian Democratic Forces (COEDF) Abera Yemaneab. The latter was released by the courts, but on the orders of the Prime Minister, re-arrested and jailed.

It is clear that Mr. Meles' two parties, the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front [TPLF] and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front [EPRDF] are organized and run in a Stalinist manner. Just like in Communist Albania under Enver Hoxha, both parties have a politburo, a central committee and a party congress. Similar to any Marxist political party, the principle of democratic centralism which Lenin conceived of in his book "What Is To Be Done" guides both organizations.⁵⁸ In the structure of MALELIT [Marxist Leninist League of Tigray] which has remained the beacon of the TPLF, of which Mr. Meles had remained a leader for many years and has not yet dissolved officially, members have to provide complete loyalty to the leader. Any person or group that fails to fulfil this iron-clad requirement has to be purged. It is precisely this that Mr. Meles has done in the year 2001.⁵⁹

Meles' authoritarianism became crystal clear, when, a disagreement which arose at the conclusion of the Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 1998- 2000 became ominous for dissenters at the centre of power. A Tigrayan ultra-nationalist faction of the Ethiopian regime had shown opposition to the Prime Minister on the grounds that he was too soft on the government in Asmara. A vicious argument concerning the policies to adopt towards Eritrea, ensued. Then, Mr. Meles manoeuvred behind the scenes and succeeded to squeeze through the Central Committee of the TPLF party, a resolution that excluded twelve of his most vocal critics from party proceedings. Among the expelled members were Tewolde Wolde Mariam, second in command to Mr. Meles himself, Siye Abraha former defence minister and Gebru Asrat president of the regional state of Tigray. Not only did he expel them from the ruling party. He brought corruption charges against them. Some such as Siye are still languishing in prison. In actual fact, when the courts found him innocent and set him free, the prime minister got him rearrested.

To complete his purge, Meles relieved dissenting cadres of the EPRDF party from their official functions. The latter were charged with corruption and sent to jail. In addition, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Tsadkan Gebre Tensay and the titular President of the Ethiopian Federal State, Dr. Negasso Gidada lost their high profile status in the organizations they commanded. Furthermore, key officials in the umbrella organizations of the EPRDF were purged. Abate Kisho and Kuma Demeksa, the Presidents of the Southern Ethiopia People's Democratic Front [SEPDF,] and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization [OPDO,] respectively were fired from their posts. It is important to point out that many of these officials were actually elected within the bounds of the democratic elections the government itself had put in place. Then, under mysterious circumstances, the Security Chief, Kinfe Gebre Medhin was assassinated in broad daylight. In a document titled "Bonapartism" - a term borrowed

Journal, Rutgers University, Vol. xvii, No. 1, 2001

⁵⁸ L. T Lih., and V. I. Lenin (2006). *Lenin rediscovered : what is to be done? in context*. Leiden: Brill

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

from Karl Max, Meles criticized his opponents of corruption and exhibiting “bourgeois attitude.”⁶⁰

Ethiopia currently suffers from the fallacy of trying to fit an authoritarian form of governance into a democratic garb. It reveals the inadequacies of the constitutional arrangements that are supposed to check the country’s rampant elite authoritarian political culture. A system guided by an authoritarian subculture cannot yield democracy because it will be eventually consumed by it.

Mr. Meles has introduced an English type of parliamentary system in Ethiopia. But a parliamentary system not guided by democratic conventions, is doomed to descend into a one-man dictatorship since the legislature is controlled by the Prime Minister who is the head of the executive branch which makes sure, by invoking the power of the party whip, that back benchers stand in line or risk being expelled from the ruling political club. It is known that Westminster’s majoritarian and “winner-take-all” principles works well in the United Kingdom. But that is because of the country’s anti-dictatorial political culture cultivated over several centuries. Furthermore, the threat of executive usurpation is checked in Britain by the relative independence of the parliamentarians of the ruling party, the efficiency of the parliamentary oversight mechanisms, and most importantly, by the anti-dictatorial mass political culture. But in a country like Ethiopia, winning the executive branch of government is the ultimate prize since this guarantees control over everything else.

The EPRDF party is driven by power as an end in itself. The lure of the government’s tremendous power has in fact transformed the political party into a power-machine that crushes everything in its way, including all major opposing parties and civil-society organizations.

Political competition in Ethiopia is characterized by high intensity. Winning elections and therefore, governmental power means control of all institutions and all facets of life in the society, and losing power means total isolation from political governance. Lack of clear separation of powers and built-in checks and balances, have encouraged the concentration of power in the Prime Minister’s hands. Mr. Meles has clearly abused the devices of majoritarianism and “winner-take-all” British tradition and has, in the process, evolved an executive dictatorship based on the paramountcy of the EPRDF party. The ruling party in Ethiopia has now become the major arm of the executive branch of government with the cabinet and the party’s executive being indistinguishable. The House of Representatives, the House of the Federation as well as the judiciary have become toys of the ruling core of the party – the TPLF.

Allied to the preponderance of the party is the supremacy of the leader who is paramount over the incumbent party and government. Elite political culture in Ethiopia, as controlled and run by the TPLF, precludes any consideration of alliances unless the EPRDF is in total charge. In cases where alliances have become unavoidable, the party, once in the seat of government, works not to strengthen them, but to manipulate and dismantle them as it did to the OLF during the transition period.⁶¹

For all practical purposes, meaningful consultation with major opposition parties was virtually banished when during the federal elections of 2005, the government cadres, intimidated, jailed and shot all those who failed to fall in line, manipulated elections in the rural areas and made an announcement that Mr. Meles party had won two-thirds of the seats. Public demonstrations were legally banned for a period of one month after the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

election day. A vicious media campaign was run accusing the opposition of disloyalty. Journalists who reported news that displeased the governing organ were hunted down and imprisoned. Foreign correspondents who reported news averse to the regime were made '*personae non gratae*'. Even the leader of the European Election Observer commission, the Honourable Anna Gomes was made persona non grata because of publicizing the electoral abuse she observed.⁶² Amharic language Voice of America and Radio DeutscheWelle reporters in Washington D.C. and Bonn were charged in absentia with "crimes against humanity and attempted genocide" for discharging their journalistic duties.

Mr. Meles' dramatic rescue of defeated government officials was almost comical. High level officials of the EPRDF central committee were miraculously reinstated into their parliamentary seats after the so-called recounting of votes were conducted under the watchful eyes of a partisan national election board. Kuma Damaksa, former president of Oromia, General Abadula Gamada, Minister of Defence, Bereket Simon, Government spokesperson and Minister of Information as well as Juneddin Saddo, Chair of OPDO, all of whom are an inner group of the EPRDF Central Committee had initially lost ballots in the thousands but were declared winners by the puppet National Election Board.

Following the above developments, tensions run high and there were public protests against the electoral abuse which the European observer group had witnessed and reported. Subsequently the government's security squad massacred at least 193 unarmed peaceful demonstrators, arrested about 40,000 supporters of the opposition and herded them into jail. Amharic speaking Ethiopians living in non-Amhara Kilils [zones] were expelled by local EPRDF cadres on charges of supporting the opposition which is wrongly equated with an Amhara movement though it is clearly pan-Ethiopian. On the orders of the Prime Minister, the leaders of the Coalition for Unity and Democracy [Kinijit] party who refused to sit in what they considered a "rigged parliament," were arrested and charged with "crimes against humanity" and "attempted genocide" - charges that carry the death penalty.

Mr. Meles and his colleagues in the TPLF and the EPRDF have never been democrats. They are economic oligarchs-cum-Marxist-Leninist cadres who have smothered the democratic fervour of the Ethiopian people. They have destroyed free business competition by running a lucrative party enterprise under the umbrella of a mega company called REST which is openly favoured by the state. They are averse to fair and free elections and are guided by an ideologically driven elite political culture.

J. Abbink remarks that following the 2005 electoral debacle, "donor countries, and development partners, who invested a lot in the "Ethiopian example", were greatly disillusioned."⁶³ But disillusionment is not enough. Although it is true that Canada, the European Union and particularly the United Kingdom have cut direct aid to the EPRDF regime, the U.S. that employs the Ethiopian military as proxy in Somalia continues to pour a tidy sum of money into the Ethiopian Prime Minister's coffers. Indeed, Mr. Meles' pretence to democracy is only a window dressing aimed at mollifying the West that supplies his regime with almost 2 billion dollars in aid every year. A caveat for all donor nations of the West as well as international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, is that they bear a grave responsibility to make bilateral and

⁶² Paulos Milkias, "Haile Selassie..." op. cit. p. 279

⁶³ J. Abbink, "Discomfiture of democracy? The 2005 election crisis in Ethiopia and its after-. Math", *African Affairs* 105, 419 (2006), pp. 173-199

multilateral aid conditional on the freeing of all political prisoners and a commitment to genuine democratic governance in Ethiopia - not simply in words but in deeds. Otherwise, with a cover from the world's only superpower, Mr. Meles will continue to follow the dictates of Mr. Kwame Nkrumah who coined the slogan: "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you."⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Awia Repue, "In Memory of Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah," Unpublished Document, April 27, 2007

www.svt.ntnu.no/ices16/



ISBN 978-82-90817-27-0 (printed)